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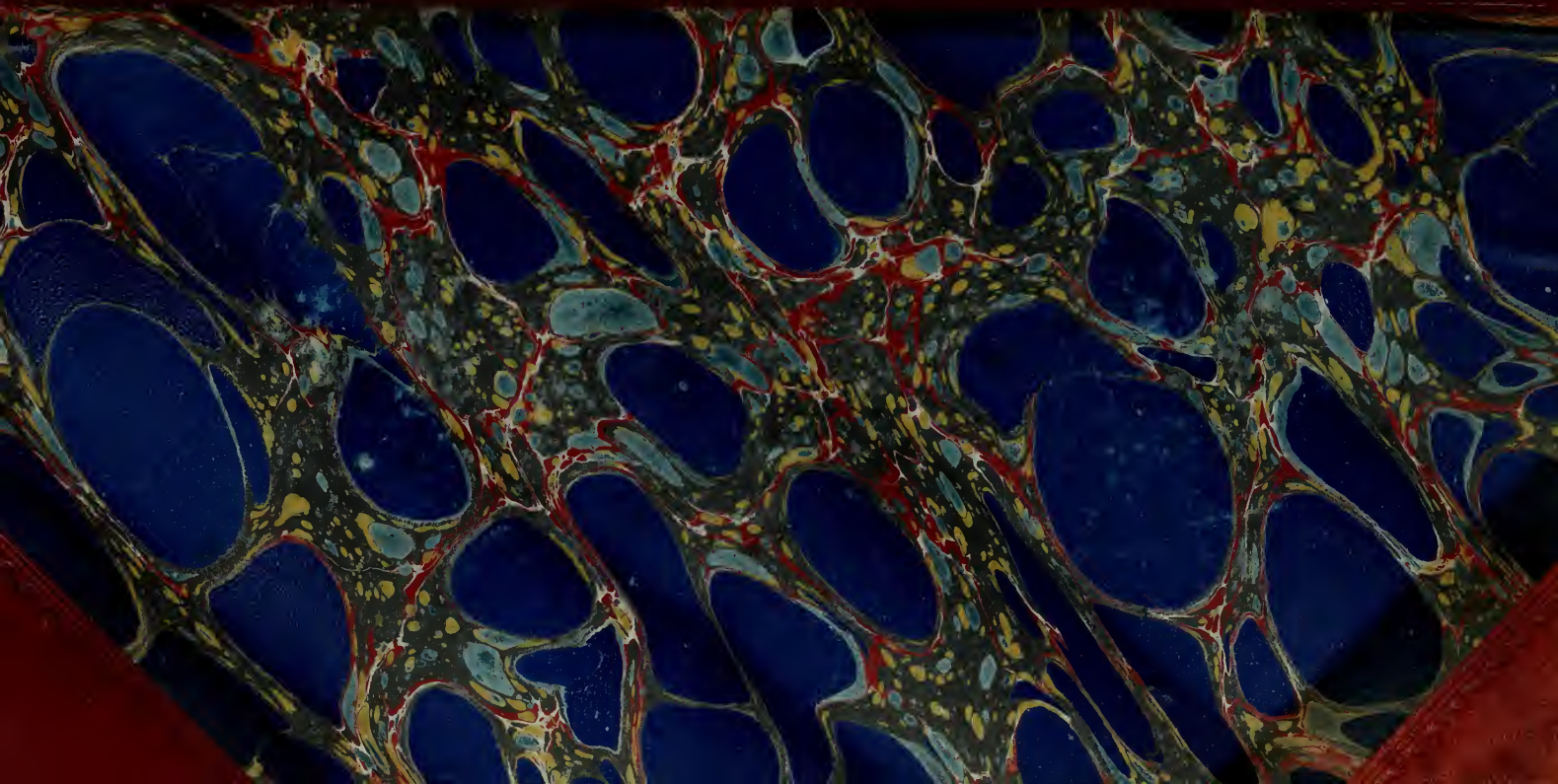

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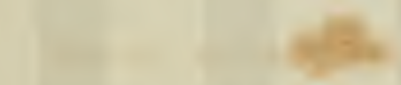

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M. ELLEN EDWARDS. J. SWAIN.

GRACE'S LETTER.

"Laden with Golden Grain."

THE

ARGOSY.

EDITED BY

MRS. HENRY WOOD.

VOLUME XXIV.

July to December, 1877.

RICHARD BENTLEY & SON,
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THE ARGOSY.

JULY, 1877.

GABRIEL'S APPOINTMENT.

CHAPTER XIX.

MRS. SALISBURY'S DIAMONDS.

OUR young artist, Alice Kerr, with Grace Pyne as her attendant, and Martin acting as courier, started for North Devon in a very different style from that in which she had commenced her journey to London. The journey itself was no less a contrast. She had no adventures, and met with no misfortunes, and her companions afforded her very little amusement. It had been her private wish to have Lucy Pyne instead of Grace, but this could not be gratified; and Grace, though attentive and respectful, was too silent and thoughtful to be an interesting companion. Indeed, Alice held to her first opinion, that however good and industrious she might be, there was nothing interesting about her at all. Her dress was too respectable, her complexion too colourless, to be of the least use in a picture; and as for any romance being connected with one so demure and grave, it was simply absurd to think of it. The depths of tenderness and suffering that lay hidden beneath that plain exterior, Alice had not skill to discover. She little dreamed that all she had ever felt, or thought she felt, all her poetical theories on woman's love and patience under disheartening circumstances, were cold, indeed, compared with poor Grace's experience of the reality.

There are many bitter troubles in life, and each heart knows its own; but few can equal the pang of finding that the treasure of the heart—we will not say its idol, for faithful love is too holy a thing to be called idolatry—is not the pure gold we had believed it—that its glitter is dross, and its ring untrue. To love and lose is hard enough—to love without return is harder still; but to love, and begin to wonder that we can, is hardest and worst of all.

It had been gradually dawning upon Grace's mind, during the last few weeks, that Darch was trying to work her up, by degrees, to do something which he durst not openly mention. Whether to show his own power, or to weaken her scruples by force of habit, he had persisted, latterly, in compelling her to meet him at such hours and in such places as must expose her to observation, and make concealment almost a matter of deceit. The misery it was to her to conceal what she did and felt from those she loved and trusted, was brought to a climax by the attempt referred to by Honor, in her conversation with Lucy; though, as often happens when only half a secret is overheard, the girl had misstated the facts. There had been a talk, at the table of Granny Hughes, about the attempt on Mr. Bruce; and Tonio, who was present, had suggested, as if half in joke half in earnest, that the gentleman wore a charm round his neck, on which his luck and that of his love depended; and Darch had looked at Grace, and whispered that if it were so, it would be worth any risk to get it. On their being alone together in the street he had reverted to the subject, and said, if such things were true, that by getting a charm into your own hands you could secure your own happiness and that of the person you loved, it was your duty to risk being called hard names. He was sure, if it came to the point, that his Grace would be true-hearted enough to take her chance—that she would rather all the parsons and ladies condemned her, unjustly, than let slip an opportunity of making their two selves rich and happy. Her answers at first were good-humouredly playful, as if the subject could only be treated as a joke; but he persisted so warmly in the argument that she at last grew alarmed, and so pointedly inquired into his meaning that he was obliged to turn the laugh against her, for having supposed he could be in earnest. The very next day, as we have seen, he summoned her in the middle of her work; and this time his proposal could not be supposed to be in jest, for he wanted her to consent to a secret marriage. He would leave her perfectly free afterwards, and not claim her till her home was ready, but he could not rest till she was his own by right at last, and if she loved him she would consent.

If she loved him! What a mockery of words it seemed to her, when he would not see that such a step, with all the deceit it must involve, would lower her in everyone's eyes, whether the truth were discovered or not! Her refusal—which no persuasion could make her retract—either excited his real resentment, or led to his assuming a resentful tone; and they parted on sorrowful terms—each reproaching the other—though every word she uttered was a stab to Grace's own heart. Her one desire then was to put herself out of his reach for a time; and when a difficulty arose about an attendant for Alice Kerr, she had offered herself to Miss Leicester with an eagerness which must have struck that young lady, but for her own pre-occupation of mind. Warmly interested for her two humble friends, she hoped their prospects would be permanently brightened by becoming

members of her future household, until they could settle in homes of their own; and it was peculiarly convenient that Grace fancied going down to Highlevels, as she could look about the village and neighbourhood, and make acquaintance with her probable abode.

It must be remembered that Grace had not the remotest suspicion of any real design against Mr. Bruce; the case had been put as a visionary supposition: all she guessed was that it referred to something on which Darch Williams durst not be more explicit. She had left London without daring to confess to anyone that she was flying from the voice, the touch, the eyes, for which she had watched and waited so long; but the temptation lay in the possibility of yielding to his influence and losing her own self-respect. And now, as she sat in her corner, trying to read a book that had been given her by Mr. Forrest, she was torturing herself with doubts as to whether she ought not to have stayed—whether Darch would give her up in anger, or whether he would follow her, when he found she was gone.

Her personal comfort, no less than that of Miss Kerr, was sedulously attended to by Martin throughout the journey, till he finally handed them into the carriage which Mrs. Salisbury had sent to meet them at the station. Alice's heart sank a little when she wished him good-bye; she made him promise to come and see her at Highlevels, especially if he had any news from London; and as she drove away into the unknown region stretching around her, she felt almost as nervous as when she first arrived at Greville Gardens. How much she longed to be there again, is not to be told: but for the shame of giving way before Grace Pyne, her courage would probably have failed more than once during the drive.

Her reception, however, went far to restore her spirits; the sight of the youthful face and figure touched Mrs. Salisbury's heart at once, so as to give spontaneous warmth to her hospitality. Alice Kerr's appearance, at this time, was so much altered for the better, through the taste and liberality of her friends, that there was no incongruity in her being accompanied by a maid, and the dress and manner of Grace Pyne pleased Mrs. Salisbury directly. Everything was done to make the weary travellers feel at home, and Alice did her best to requite the courtesy shown her, and to be lively and agreeable—conscious all the while that the mention of Edith or Gabriel would bring back that aching of the throat which she had with so much difficulty overcome. The effort was perceived and appreciated: it was impossible not to feel interested in one, so young and so situated, courageously endeavouring to fight her way through the world; and Mrs. Salisbury, whose sympathies were never backward where an orphan was concerned, found her doubts as to Sir Jesse's motives fast melting away. She was even disposed to give him credit for more benevolence than she had always found possible; and instead of enduring her visitor good-humouredly, for Myra's sake, felt drawn towards her on her own.

Repressing her granddaughter's eager desire to overwhelm the guest with questions, and drag her all over the house to look at her treasures, she took care that Alice was refreshed and rested, without a word having been said of the portrait—persuading her to retire early, and accompanying her to her room, to see that she had all she wanted.

Grace had been busy already, and Alice's trunk was unpacked and everything in its place; and the elder lady's eyes glanced with satisfaction at the books, mostly fresh and new, which had accompanied the young traveller from the city.

"You have good companions here, I see, my dear; your art will thrive all the better for their friendship," she observed, with a sigh that betrayed the presence of a hidden sorrow, such as her exterior rarely revealed. Her "good night" was accompanied by a few words of blessing which thrilled to Alice's heart, and brought the dew into her eyes—so strange was the sound, and so sweet.

"It must be like what one has read of having a grandmamma of one's own," she thought. "Martin was quite right in telling me I should like her. I am afraid she thinks me quite a child. To-morrow I will show her what I really am."

Alas! the morrow, which was to do so much, found the artist in the depths of ignominious misery. A little imprudence and neglect of precautions on the journey had brought on raging toothache, and her day was spent in alternate fits of restlessness and prostration; a piteous apology for neglect of duty being her response to Mrs. Salisbury's kind attentions. Mrs. Salisbury was tender of her conscientious feelings, and comforted her with good-natured assurances that no time was really lost, as Myra had a cold, and would, most likely, not have been able to sit. They would both be the better for waiting another day. And she brought in a pile of books and engravings, and bade her lie on the sofa, and try to beguile the weary time; and if she wished for medical advice, a messenger should be sent for Dr. Nelson.

Alice thanked her gratefully, but in private resolved to hold out against that.

"I don't want the doctor, Grace," she said, when they were alone, "but I do wish I had Mr. Jones's bottle of chloroform. There is none in the house, and it would do me more good than anything."

"I beg your pardon, ma'am—*whose* bottle did you say?"

"Oh, don't you know the story of Mr. Jones and the chloroform, which he had for his toothache, at the hotel where Mr. Bruce slept the first night he was in London—how the poor man mistook his own bedroom, and tried Mr. Bruce's door in the night, and was so frightened at having done it, that in his hurry to get away he dropped his fur cap, with the phial in it?"

"I never heard it mentioned, Miss Kerr. It was a mistake, of course."

"So Mr. Bruce says: but the wise Erasmus does not agree with him. His Leatherstocking genius cannot admit the possibility of making such a blunder. He thinks—but you must not repeat this, Grace."

"Certainly not, Miss Kerr."

"Well, he thinks that mischief was intended—as some one really does follow them about. I've seen him myself."

"My dear!" exclaimed Grace, startled out of her propriety. "What is he like?"

"That I cannot tell you, for they said he was disguised; but I remember his cough, for I heard it one night at the Mission Chapel. I only wish he would drop his remedy at my door, and then I might hope for some sleep!"

Alice did get some sleep, however, in the course of the day, without the chloroform, and was sufficiently relieved to accept a visit from Myra. That young lady, who had been with difficulty kept out of her room till then, entered big with mystery and importance, and having closed the door with her finger on her lips, took a seat opposite Alice with a whisper. "I want to show you my gold."

The fragment of a smile, which was all Alice could do, being taken for assent, Myra produced an Indian casket of sandal-wood and silver, unlocked it with due solemnity, and took out, one by one, about a dozen coins of different countries; expatiating, as she did so, on the value of each, and the possibility that some day they might be worth a great deal more. Papa always sent her one on her birthday: it was so much better to have gold than anything else. And her eyes, as she gazed at her hoard, showed how firmly she believed what she said.

The artist-spirit began to stir in spite of the aching nerve; Alice's first impression that so heavy-looking a child would never make a picture, was at once removed. That strange effect of "gold's sacred hunger" in a young and rather plain face had a powerful fascination; pain and weariness were for the moment forgotten; her picture danced before her eyes—she only longed to begin.

"You are thinking of something," said Myra, suddenly, as she became aware of the gaze which was learning her features by heart. "Have you any gold to show me of your own?"

"My art is my gold," said Alice. "I earn it by drawing, and then the gold comes."

"I wish I could earn it too. I did find some once, under an apple-tree. Look here!" and she showed Martin's nugget on her chain, "I dug that up, my own self; and when those nice men come again, I mean to dig up some more. I'll show you where, if you promise not to dig too."

Alice promised readily; saying she had heard enough about gold-digging to prevent her ever wishing for a share.

"Oh, then you can tell me all about it, can't you? I tried to read some of the books, but they are too stupid."

"Well, if you sit like a good child, I will."

"I don't want to sit like a good child; I want to sit like a rich one," said Myra, decidedly. "Any dirty school-girl can be good, you know."

"Oh!" said Alice, somewhat disconcerted, and vaguely wondering what Edith and Mr. Forrest would have said; "then I will tell you how it shall be. You shall be drawn with a basket of flowers at your feet, which you have just overturned in your hurry to take up some beautiful jewels."

"Grandmamma's jewels? Oh, dear, how delightful! But why shouldn't I put them on? Papa said perhaps I should."

"No, that would only have a commonplace effect, as if you were just anybody's child dressed up in play. I want you to look as if you belonged to some interesting story, in which everything depended on your choice between the flowers and the jewels, and you had just chosen what you liked best."

"Oh, that would be the jewels, of course."

"Of course. And then, all the time I am drawing, you will have them to look at; but if you were to put them on, you would not see them at all."

"No more I should. Oh, how happy I shall be! I wish to-morrow was come, and that you were quite well."

"So do I, I am sure; but we must have patience. I will show you a sketch meanwhile which will explain how you must sit."

But the sketch had been put away, and only Grace knew where; and on inquiry it appeared that Grace was gone out, and had been absent some time. The reason of her absence was satisfactorily explained on her return, for she brought back a small phial of camphorated chloroform.

"I spoke to the doctor himself, Miss Kerr. He gave me that for you, and promised to look in to-morrow."

"Just what I didn't want: but thank you all the same. It was very good of you to take this trouble, Grace; only ——"

"No trouble at all, ma'am; I promised the ladies that you should be properly attended to. And I saw Mr. Martin at the doctor's, and he sent his duty: and if there be anything you want done, he is at your service at any hour you please. Those were Mr. Bruce's orders."

"How kind they all are! how much kinder everybody is than I thought for!" said the young portrait painter as she applied her specific, and prepared herself for rest, advising Grace, who was evidently very tired with her walk, to follow her example, and secure a good long night. Full of hopes for the future, and partially relieved for the present, Alice little thought what a terrible suspicion had been roused in her attendant's mind, to drive quiet sleep from her pillow. Martin had not told her much—his answers had been short and guarded; but he had said enough to confirm Alice's story, and fill

Grace's heart with such fear and doubt, as to whether she had done wrong in leaving town, that half the night passed in tears—only soothed at last by prayer.

To the credit of Dr. Nelson it must be stated that his prescription had due effect, and the artist found herself next day, if a little pulled down in strength, sufficiently free from pain to be ready for work. Indeed, Myra's impatience was hardly greater than her own, and the morning was so clear and bright, the air so deliciously sweet, that, as she said, it was hard to believe they were on the same island as St. Edmund's district, where it was easier to get anything than light, except sweetness. Even in the act of establishing her drawing-board at the library window, pronounced to be the most favourable for artistic purposes, Alice could not help lingering awhile to admire the distant landscape, now visible through the leafless trees—the mingling of blue, purple, and grey, the graceful sweep of the outlines, where the moor closed in the woodland, and, above all, the far-off dip on the horizon, marking the points between which a good glass could sometimes detect the sea. It was all so beautiful it seemed a pity not to go out and sketch; and there was something that almost jarred on the harmony of the scene when Mrs. Salisbury entered, carrying in her hand a strong leather box, and wearing an expression of grave uneasiness which had not been on her face before. Alice's first idea was that she thought her dilatory, and she was stammering out something about making up for lost time when Miss Strahan was ready, but she found that Mrs. Salisbury was thinking of something else—something that she had a little difficulty in mentioning. She set the box on the table, and stood for a few minutes looking down upon it, her fingers playing absently on the lid.

"Pray, Miss Kerr," she said at last, with an effort, "was it an idea of yours that a child like Myra should have her likeness taken dressed out in diamonds?"

"Mine! I was against it from the first: only Sir Jesse was afraid of her being disappointed."

"You understood, then, it was her own wish?"

"Yes, and as it had been a promise, we consulted how it could be arranged without making the picture ridiculous. I suggested something of this kind," and she showed her pen-and-ink sketch.

"I see," was Mrs. Salisbury's reply, as she looked thoughtfully at the spirited outline, and then at the face of the artist. "And Sir Jesse approved of your suggestion?"

"Yes, I am sure he did."

There was a short silence before Mrs. Salisbury spoke again.

"Miss Kerr," she said, "young as you are, I know, from what I have heard of you, that you have had some experience in trouble, and have bravely borne your share. This makes it easier for an old woman like myself to speak to you of mine."

Alice coloured and bowed, touched by the appeal: but wondering to what it would lead.

"You were made aware, before you came, of my poor child's infirmity of mind, which makes her training and education a work of so much anxiety. We are allowed to hope that she will outgrow it, and meanwhile we oppose her fancies as little as possible, as direct opposition has a perilous effect on her nerves. She has a strange power of imagination, and lives, at times, in a world of her own—a world undreamed of by most children, for, singular as it may seem, and sad as it is to watch, her present dreams are all of one object—the acquisition of money."

"Ah!" said Alice, keenly. This agreed with her own impression, but she did not like to say so.

"These jewels of mine," continued Mrs. Salisbury, unlocking the box, "are to be hers after my death, as they would have been her mother's, and the poor child has become so impressed with the idea of their value that a sight of them has latterly been her highest reward. Valuable they are—very valuable—and I mention it, to justify a precaution I wish to impress upon you. It may be troublesome and inconvenient, but I think you will kindly forgive that, Miss Kerr."

"I will do anything you wish—I don't mind what it is," said Alice with perfect sincerity.

"Then promise me never, on any consideration, to leave these jewels for a moment unguarded. If you are interrupted in your work, and wish to leave the room yourself, lock them up in the box, and take away the key. If you do it as a matter of course, you will have little difficulty; but if you yield to Myra once on the subject, she will always grow excited when she has to give them up. You will keep my wishes in mind?"

She held out her hand to her young guest, who had only just time to return its pressure, when Myra, her hair and dress newly arranged for the occasion, came in to take her place.

The face of the poor child, when established in her wicker chair, with an overturned basket at her feet, whose contents were to be supplied later, was so mournfully happy that it went to the heart of her painter. What a jangling of sweet bells must be going on to fill so young a brain with such discordant notes! For it was, palpably, not the pleasure of looking at, or the desire of wearing, something beautiful and costly, reserved for state occasions and grown-up people—any girl younger than Myra might have thought that a treat. It was the keen look of the trader—and that of the lower, more sordid kind—which disfigured the childish countenance, and was, in itself, so unsuited to its shape and colouring that Alice was irresistibly reminded of the old Irish legend—in which the changeling elf, with its centuries of incomprehensible existence, appears in the form of the stolen babe. But she was not the less alive to the impetus

which that very incongruity gave to her own fancy, and was as eager to begin as Myra was to sit. All minor preliminaries being arranged, Mrs. Salisbury unlocked the leathern box and took out the diamonds.

They were arranged in a complete set for a lady's wear—necklace, earrings, brooch, and bracelet. By far the most valuable, from the size and colour of the stones, was the necklace, as Alice saw, and it frightened her to have such a treasure in her charge. Mrs. Salisbury smiled a little at her naïve wonder; but the smile changed to sadness as she placed the necklace and earrings in Myra's hand, and drew back to observe the effect.

"I shall be grateful to you, my dear," she said, kindly, "if you help me to connect these things with hope, and talent, and energy. The artist who brings such qualities to such a work is richer than these could make her."

The work began, and so prosperously, thanks to the goodwill of painter and sitter, that considerable progress had been effected before they were interrupted by a visit from Dr. Nelson. No one else would have been admitted, but Myra was eager to show him the jewels; and Mrs. Salisbury's nervous anxiety was relieved by his arrival in time to judge if the excitement were too much for her brain. He was very kind and pleasant, Alice thought, and displayed great interest in the portrait, standing behind her chair for some little time to watch her proceedings—and letting a sigh escape him, which recalled what she had heard of his sorrows. His wife had, indeed, been gifted with a considerable amount of taste and execution; and it was not till he had mastered his voice that he could begin to criticise.

When he did, it was to find fault with Alice's anatomy—a subject on which she was always rather sensitive, knowing it to be her weak point. She argued, rather petulantly, that one couldn't be always attending to those little things when full of the general effect.

"You would find your own general effect rather peculiar, if those little things were *not* attended to," said the doctor. His attention was called away by Myra, who wanted him to guess at the value of the necklace. Without committing himself on that point, he admired them to her heart's content, and told her several curious facts about diamonds, and the perils endured in their pursuit—perils which to her imagination possessed a wonderful charm. Any adventures or difficulties that made you rich were well worth going through—she only wished she could meet with some.

"Ah," he said, "if these gems could speak, perhaps their tale would make you think differently. We read of sermons in stones—but stones like these deal mostly in tragedies; and their brightness, if we knew all, would seem but a shining mockery!"

The light was playing on the treasured jewels as he spoke, and if things inanimate could indeed have found a voice to answer, they must have laughed him to scorn. Little did he know what their

revelation would have been—or that Myra's idea of their past was not more remote from the truth than his own!

"Your gold-finder has taken possession of Lowlevels," he said presently; when, the sitting being over, Mrs. Salisbury was replacing the diamonds in their cases. "He is a cool hand, and did what I could not have done: he cleared out old Medland and his wife at a day's warning. They had had notice before that the house was being sold, but they rather hoped to keep possession some time longer, and were sorely vexed at such prompt dismissal. But Mr. Martin was obdurate, and he is actually there all alone, except a dog, which he bought at the inn. Excuse me, Mrs. Salisbury—may I look at that brooch for one moment?"

She gave it to him in some surprise. He looked at it very earnestly—weighed it in his hand, and carried it to the light. All their eyes were upon him, curious to discover the meaning of this proceeding. He took a magnifying glass out of his pocket, but that did not seem to satisfy him. At last he tried one of the brilliants on the window. Mrs. Salisbury smiled.

"One would almost imagine you doubted their being real," she said, a little offended.

"I told you I had heard curious facts about diamonds, and I only wanted to try an experiment," was his reply, as he handed back the jewel. He took leave with a smiling face, but it changed to thoughtfulness and perplexity as he drove away.

CHAPTER XX.

HOW THE CLOCK STRUCK AT LOWLEVELS.

ANYONE who knows how much a new event is appreciated in a small village, will understand what a boon to the gossips of Level Bridge and its neighbourhood were the proceedings of Martin the Ironhand. Mine host and hostess of the inn, who were to a certain degree in his confidence and aided and abetted him to the best of their ability, were not a little amused by the various reports that reached them respecting the strange behaviour of this new-comer; whom the dispossessed Medlands bitterly denounced as the most unfeeling, inconsiderate person they had ever come across. His offences, in their eyes, were twofold: first, in enforcing their prompt departure, and secondly, in keeping watch over them when they did depart, whereby their little plans for stripping the premises of all available booty were cruelly frustrated. They had, indeed, fairly over-reached themselves by their delay; ample warning had been given, that they might have time to pack up their own effects; but the hope of getting an early crop out of the garden (which they always told Dr. Nelson barely kept them and the pig in vegetables) made them hold on as long as possible, and consequently their opportunity was lost.

The doctor, whose property they had learned to look upon as their own, having no time to investigate the matter, allowed them to take the live stock, with the exception of some of the poultry, which he presented to Martin, in the joy of getting this painful investment fairly off his hands. A fine young setter, purchased from the landlord, with whom it had been left by a traveller, was also to accompany Mr. Bruce's confidential servant into his new quarters; and Mrs. Medland loudly declared among her intimates that times was changed indeed when gentlemen's servants gave themselves such airs, and wore shooting-jackets, and stood over you with guns in their hands when you was packing your bits of things, till you was that terrified you wouldn't have slept under the same roof with him, not if it was ever so! Patting his dog, too, with such a look in his wicked eyes, as much as to say that for half a farthing he'd let it fly at your throat. She didn't know what sort of a gentleman the master could be to send down such a person, as that, to turn out poor honest, hard-working creatures; and she only hoped he'd never be sorry for it—that was all!

Nobody else seemed particularly sorry: the general impression being that the hardworking creatures had had a capital berth on very easy terms, and had made a good thing of it altogether. But the mysterious interest excited in Martin was enhanced by the reports of his skill as a marksman—reports which he rather encouraged—with the additional comment that, according to the custom of bush life, he always kept his gun ready for action.

At the suggestion of his friend the hostess, he employed a poor widow of her acquaintance to clean the place after the departure of its occupants, while he was laying in stores for his independent housekeeping; and fain would that good woman have entered his service altogether; for, as she said, no young gentleman could be civiller or more open-handed. It quite went to her heart to leave him there by himself at night; if he would but have asked her to stop, she wouldn't have been afraid of nothing, not she, with him and his dog and his gun to take care of her. No; she hadn't seen or heard nothing in the house; that Mrs. Medland had left muddle and dust enough to keep her hard at it, and she had no time for thinking of noises. She would have cooked and done everything for the young gentleman, if he would have let her stop; but he said he liked best to be quite alone.

There is no doubt that this was true, strange as it appeared to lovers of conversation. It was with an unwonted sense of repose that Erasmus Martin found himself once more solitary, though in a dwelling as unlike the log-house of his boyhood as the valley of the Level to the Australian bush. He lingered at first on the drive before the door, listening to the rush of the river below, and looking up at the starry sky. His dog, who had attached himself to his new master with the passionate ardour of love at first sight, lay quietly on the

stone step, pretending sleepiness, but watching him under his eyelids, with every hair on the alert, ready to bound up and go after him to the world's end. The touch, the voice, the ways of this new lord were ecstasy to Settler's sport-loving heart, after his endurance of honourable captivity among commonplace and uncongenial spirits; and he was ripe for the wildest frolic ever devised by man or beast. But the longing was unshared by his master, to whom the silence of that lonely spot, in the mild April evening beneath the stars, was more like rest than anything he had known since he came to England.

The state of siege in which they had lived during the last few weeks had kept his senses always on the stretch, while wearied out by the unceasing noise of the city. His mind, meanwhile, had been hourly receiving new impressions, making new discoveries, finding fresh food for thought, and straining after the variety of knowledge which flowed as unconsciously from David Forrest's conversation as teaching did from his daily life. To the good mission-priest, accustomed to encounter every degree of stolidity, vacuity, and indifference, the intercourse with such intelligent ignorance as Martin's had been so attractive that he overlooked the risk of pouring too much into his mind at once. Night after night they had sat up together, the one relating, explaining, or quoting from the stores at his command; the other listening, marvelling, drinking it all in, and occasionally asking a question: and but for Miss Thirza and Gabriel, neither would have had his proper share of rest. And, reluctant as the neophyte had been to leave London, it was a positive relief to be there on his lonely watch, leaning on his gun, and with a task before him more familiar to his experience than dealing with books—the task of a secret search under the eye of a hidden enemy.

That he should be followed and watched he could not doubt; it was one reason for consenting to occupy the post, so as to direct attention from his friends. He had been too fully taken up with the business in hand to think of anything else since his arrival; and now that he was alone, his mind and he seemed for the first time to come face to face, so as to allow him to see in what respect it had suffered change.

The day had not yet come for him to wish, with Alexander Selkirk, that he could return to his former life; on the contrary, he wondered now that he had been content with it so long. Certainly, were he to sail back to-morrow, he could never be again the same man—these cravings, yearnings, aspirations after something greater, wiser, better than his own experience and knowledge could show, would never be satisfied with what had sufficed him then. And yet, in this new world, so full of unfathomed wonders, what place was there for him? What was he fit for, but to do what he was doing, and to clear the way for Gabriel's peace?

"They shall not break his heart by touching his wife while I am here," he said aloud, as he threw his gun over his shoulder. "Come,

Settler! as we are the whole garrison, we must visit our outposts. It will be sharp practice if they disturb us the first night; but we won't make it easier for them than we can help."

The dog leaped up joyfully: and he took the liveliest interest in the manner in which Martin made the round of the outer fastenings, securing each with some contrivance of his own, so as to render it impossible to enter the premises, except by climbing walls or forcing fences. Having performed the same office to the doors and shutters of the house, he lighted a candle, and went through every room, satisfying himself that there was no living creature within the walls but Settler and himself; and that anyone trying to enter would not find it an easy matter under the circumstances.

How it had been entered formerly was another question.

The furniture, according to agreement, had been left in the house. Mr. Bruce was to have the use of it for a year, and then take it, if he pleased, at a valuation; but all looked as rooms will look that are not inhabited—dreary, cold, uninviting—all but the dining-room, where his attentive charwoman had laid the cloth for his supper, and the kitchen, where it was keeping hot before the fire. In both of these the elements of comfort were to be found; but Martin was not yet ready to cultivate them. The doctor's sad story ran in his mind, and so did the solution of the problem which had occurred to him when he heard it first—that there must have been some secret passage by which the entrance had been made the result of which was so cruel.

His tool-chest was in the hall, ready for action; and, exchanging his gun for a hammer, he went about the passages, testing every doubtful spot, and keenly listening for anything like a hollow sound—but to no purpose. The enigma was not to be guessed so easily, and he abandoned the attempt for the present, proceeding with Settler into the kitchen, to fetch the supper; which they discussed together, to their mutual satisfaction. Over his evening pipe, the hunter revolved his plans for the next day, and then opened one of the volumes with which David Forrest had half filled his portmanteau; being just as indifferent to the question as to whether any attempt to shake his nerves would be made that night, as Settler was to the contents of his book.

A couple of hours passed; and Settler, who had given up all idea of any more fun before bedtime, had enjoyed a luxurious nap after his good supper—dreaming of happy hunting-grounds, where birds and rabbits almost asked to be caught—when the dog suddenly became aware, in some mysterious fashion, that all was not right. He lifted his nose from his feathery paws, pricked up his ears, and looked at his master. The book was open on the table, but the reader had sunk back asleep. Settler rose slowly, smelt, and listened—couldn't tell what to make of it, but was sure there was *something*. He poked his nose into Martin's hand. The hunter was roused in a moment.

"What is it, old man?"

Settler answered with a little whine, partly suggestive, partly inquiring; and Martin in his turn listened, and perceived that the dog was right. There was a sound he could not account for: and it seemed to be somewhere *in* the house, not outside. He opened the dining-room door: Settler rushed out barking, and when he had been called in and silenced, there was nothing else to be heard. Again did Martin patrol passage and room, halting ever and anon to listen; he could detect no clue to the mystery, though more convinced than ever that his conjecture was correct.

Some one must have the means of coming in upon him, all his defences notwithstanding. If only he could find out how!

"Makes one think of that time with the bushrangers, Settler," he said, caressing the dog's silky ears, as they sat again by the fire, and his memory went back to one of the fierce scenes of his boyhood—his father's log-house giving shelter to two or three exhausted fugitives pursued by thieves—the preparation for defence, with such means as lay within reach—the hours of watching and expectancy—his father's stern, set firmness of feature, as he handled his loaded piece, and the bitter laugh with which, when the alarm proved to be unfounded, he laid aside the weapon, observing that they knew better than to molest one of their own fraternity. What that meant, his son had never dared to ask, and for a time had forgotten it altogether; but it seemed to come back now as if it had been yesterday; and again he seemed to hear the deep, mournful voice in the stillness of the night, moaning out the words of that awful service: "Cursed be he that removeth his neighbour's land mark."

"This won't do, Settler," he said at last, springing up from his seat, as if to shake off the sadness creeping over him; "we will take one more good hunt, and then we will go to bed. They shall not have to boast that we could not sleep for fear of them. Let us see what time it is by the big clock. I must have a look at it to-morrow, and see if I can make it strike."

The clock thus referred to was a large old-fashioned piece of workmanship, in an oaken case, which had been let into the wall opposite the dining-room door. According to Mrs. Medland's account, it never struck now, though no doubt it did once upon a time. It was wound up weekly, and set, when anybody took the trouble. On examining it now, Erasmus soon discovered whence the recent sound had proceeded, for the clock had run down. He rectified that small disaster, and was consulting his own watch—Gabriel's gift—to set it correctly, when he was surprised to see Settler, who had followed at his heels, thrust his nose inquisitively into the case, and show a decided intention of rummaging at the back. On being spoken to, he gave a little whine, and presently growled, but all Martin's searching for any visible cause was fruitless. There might be rats in the walls, for all he knew; and, at any rate, he could press his investigations

no further by candle-light. To make assurance doubly sure, he took off the old broken lock of the clock-case, and quickly replaced it with one of his own, of which he had a supply in his tool-chest. This done, he went to bed, and slept without any further disturbance.

His time was fully taken up the next day with sundry workmanlike jobs he had planned beforehand for the baffling of intruders; and he only stirred from the house to give Settler a run—admitting no visitors inside the gate, to which his faithful widow brought him a supply of milk and bread. Such of the curious folk that hung about the place, hoping to glean some incident which would make a sensation, could only report that they heard hammering: and this they were quite welcome to hear. Late in the evening, Martin and his dog appeared in the village, on their way to the post-office, and several idlers listened with eager interest to hear him ask for his letters—sympathising audibly with his evident disappointment on receiving none. But when the doctor's gig drove up, and the doctor himself beckoned Martin to conference, the interest deepened into excitement, and everybody felt it would be only public-spirited in the two to hold their conversation aloud.

It did not take long; a few friendly questions and answers—a message, an inquiry, and expressions of mutual good understanding, constituted nearly the whole of it; and then Dr. Nelson drove on, and Martin turned his face homeward, tempted by the freshness of the evening air to take the longest way round. It ended, of course, in his going further than he meant, and it was nearly ten o'clock when he put the key in the lock of the house door and let himself in.

As he did so, to his surprise, the refractory old clock began to strike; and to strike, moreover, in so sharp and flurried a fashion that Martin stood still for a minute, staring at it in astonishment. Settler, however, showed his teeth, and began to demonstrate an intention of looking into the matter—which was nipped in the bud by a peremptory order to lie down. A twinkle in Martin's eye betrayed a grim sense of humour at the situation; but he contented himself by observing, in a very distinct voice, that he supposed the clock had run down again, and he must look at it to-morrow.

The striking had ceased: but Settler was charmed to obey the order to lie down opposite the dial, for he was sure in his own mind that some fun was coming. Meanwhile, the hunter went below, made his coffee, filled his tray, and brought up their supper, as he had the previous evening; lighted a small fire in the dining-room, and a couple of candles, and finally produced a revolver, which he carried in his left hand, while he held a key in his right.

"Now, Settler, we'll just see what's the matter here, before we sit down to supper."

He unlocked the case, and the dog made one bound into it. A cry and a scuffle followed, and in another minute Martin had seized the collar of a man whom Settler had got by the leg. Between

them the fellow was soon on the floor of the hall. Where, instead of offering resistance, he began to implore mercy in such piteous tones that Martin's hand involuntarily relaxed. Calling off the dog, he quietly uncocked his revolver.

"You had better get up, Medland," he said. "If you are sober, I will hear you presently."

"Sober? What have I had for the last four-and-twenty hours inside my lips, sir? Nothing. And I'm that starved with cold, too, I've caught my death, I do believe. Oh, sir, if you'd left me there another night it would just have been a murder at your door. I couldn't have lived through it—no, I couldn't."

"Then I've saved your life, it seems?" said Martin, as he coolly locked the clock-case.

"I don't deny it, sir—you have: and thankful I am to you for that same. Only I'm that sick and faint I don't know how to say what I mean, and if so be your honour would spare me a mouthful of brandy ——"

"I have none—I never use it. Come in here."

He led the way into the dining-room, gave his unbidden guest a chair, and poured him out a steaming cup of coffee. The trembling creature swallowed some of it in haste, and then devoured the bread and meat set before him with an avidity that convinced Erasmus his tale was so far true, that he had been a long time without food. His appearance, never attractive at the best, was now wretched in the extreme, from his clothes, face, and hands being grimed with dust and dirt, and his hair all one tangled dust-heap. Settler, having been instructed that his person was protected by the laws of hospitality, contented himself with occasionally giving him a contemptuous sniff, and refusing all overtures at conciliation. His master might choose to tolerate such company, for reasons of his own—but no dog of the world would be drawn into acknowledging his acquaintance.

Whatever Martin's reasons were, his method of treatment had a marked effect on his prisoner; as the meal went on, and his strength and senses came back, young Medland, for it was that individual, involuntarily dropped the whine, and ceased the protestations, with which he had tried to defend himself at first. He became more silent; and looked sincerely ashamed when Martin calmly asked him how he felt now.

"Well, sir, I must say I feel uncommon small."

"You had need be small, if you play such tricks often."

"Meaning the clock, sir? Ah, there's more room behind there than you'd suppose. I could tell you something about it that would surprise you, sir."

"You had better keep all that for the magistrate."

"The magistrate! Dear sir, you never mean to say you'd give me into custody, after I've sat at your table, and eaten of your bread? Why, sir, the very savages wouldn't do such a thing."

"You go and get caught prying into one of our nigger camps, and just see what they will do to you."

"I know, I know, sir, I deserve no favour; and if you had kicked me out at the door, I couldn't have blamed you; but as you didn't do it then, I can't think you'll be hard on me now."

"To be sure, it was a pity I didn't, but anyone may make a mistake; and if it will ease your mind ——"

"Don't laugh at me, sir, unless you mean to make me laugh too. I could almost laugh to find myself sitting here, so pleasant, along with a gentleman, after the miserable time I've had of it, in the cold and the dark. Oh, sir, if only you'd overlook it this time, you shall never repent being good to me. I'll make you amends; I'll serve you faithful—I'd like nothing better than to be on your side, if you'd give me a trial."

"What do you mean? I am a servant myself."

"I know, sir, and there's upper and lower servants in many houses, and if you'd take me under you, I could be useful—I could, indeed. I've been thinking a deal about my past life when I thought I might be starved to death and nobody know it; and I see I've no chance of doing better if I'm left to myself—I want a master who'll hold me tight, and not let me have a drop, though I beg for it on my knees—and you're the first man I ever saw that I'd like to call my master. I know you hold good cards, and I never do."

Martin leaned his elbow on his knee, and his chin on his hand, looking the speaker steadily in the face.

"What put *that* into your head?"

"Can't say, sir, but I'm sure of it. And I should like to be on your side, and back your luck. I know a thing or two, sir, that you'd be glad to know too, and perhaps not care that all the world should hear of it: and you'll find I can be a good servant, if you'll only keep that revolver between me and the drink. This coffee of yours is worth it all."

"So you say now—but to-morrow I shall have you slinking out, when my back is turned for a moment, and getting it on the sly, and then expecting me to look after you."

"Sir, if you'll give me a trial, I'll never stir out without your leave. You may lock me in, if you like, when you go out yourself. Don't refuse me, sir; it seems to me to-night that I've got a chance, and it sha'n't be my fault if you are ever sorry you gave it me."

The man's voice and manner were so strangely earnest, that Martin began to consider the matter. If, as seemed probable, he really knew some of the mysteries of the house, his assistance would be valuable, and his secrecy might be secured by giving him an interest in the matter. It was a new sensation, moreover, to be approached as a master in this suppliant guise; and the imploring petition, to be saved from himself, moved the young man the more from what he had learned in St. Edmund's district. It was the wail that David

Forrest had often told him of, as ringing in his own ears; though he confessed it was only one here and there who would consent to be rescued, in spite of their misery. This fellow might be acting a part, but he did not think he was. Anyhow, to utilise him would be more agreeable, perhaps less hazardous, than giving him up to the police: and, if he turned out treacherous, well, there were resources at hand for paying his wages. One thing had first to be inquired about—were his parents aware of his being concealed in the house? Yes, was the answer, they had encouraged him to do it, hoping to give the new tenant a fright. It was not the first time he had done it, but he had never been caught before.

"Now look here, and mind you tell me the truth. Had you any hand in frightening that poor young lady?"

"No, indeed, sir. I have a notion that I know who was concerned in that, but it was no doing of mine."

"Will you help me, like a man, to find out all about it, and prevent its happening again?"

"I will try, sir—and I think I can do it."

"Then I will try you, on one condition: that you do not spoil my cards by showing them to anyone. Do you hear?"

"I understand you, sir. I am dumb."

"If I do you a good turn now, you'll do me another when you can; and if I have a run of luck, you shall share it. But the first time you fall back into your old ways, remember I have not the patience of the lady at Highlevels—I shall not try you again."

"I shall remember, sir. You see I am one of those who can't abide to be under a woman. When they tell me one thing, I always want to do another; but your face is that of a master, and I feel the luck is on your side. You'll want it all before you've done."

CHAPTER XXI.

WHAT HAPPENED DURING THE FIRE.

It seemed very long to Alice Kerr, even in the midst of her interesting work, since she had parted with her friends; especially as she had been disappointed in not hearing from Edith. She herself had written every day, keeping a complete journal of her doings and experiences, pouring out her sentiments on every subject but one, in full reliance on the indulgence of the reader; but with the exception of one short, encouraging note, there had not been the response she craved. Grace, too, had received no answer to her last letter to Lucy; and instead of growing strong in the country air, she was looking so ill that kind Mrs. Salisbury, laying it all to London smoke, was putting her through a course of new-laid eggs and clotted cream, assisted by drives in the little pony-carriage, to nourish, as she

said, the poor starved lungs. On one of these occasions she took her to Longmorton, the small market-town where the station was; and, as she usually did, inquired for letters at the post-office. They had no second post in the village, but could sometimes forestal the next day's intelligence by an expedition of this kind. As it happened, there were letters both for Miss Kerr and Grace Pyne, and good Mrs. Salisbury's satisfaction in handing the welcome despatch to her humble companion was all the greater for the absence of "Miss" before Grace's name.

"There, my good girl, I hope that will cheer you up. Read and enjoy it, for I do not want to talk; I have enough to think of, besides attending to the pony."

She took care not to look that way for the next mile or so, that the hands, whose trembling the rustle of the paper betrayed, might have time to grow more steady. The shy, quiet Londoner, with her neat, sober dress and industrious fingers, had made great progress in Mrs. Salisbury's esteem; her reticence contrasting favourably with the ready tongues of her village acquaintance. It was so seldom that Grace Pyne's voice was heard, except in answer to a question, that it was rather a surprise when she suddenly begged to ask if they should be passing anywhere near Lowlevels.

"Yes, within an easy walk across the fields. Do you wish to call there?"

"If it would not be giving you too much trouble, ma'am—if I might be set down, I could walk up, after I had spoken to Mr. Martin."

"You want to see Mr. Martin? We will go up to the house, then. I should like to speak to him myself."

"Thank you, ma'am," said Grace, pressing her hands nervously together on her lap, and looking so steadfastly at the distance before her, that Mrs. Salisbury quite enjoyed the thought of the treat she was giving her in that view of the moor.

The pony, however, to whom scenery was a secondary object compared with his own stable, no sooner found his nose in a direction that promised a longer road than he intended, than he began to behave as ladies' pets usually do. When, between weak chastisement and fervent coaxing, he was induced to acquiesce, he did it under so much protest, that his mistress really had enough to absorb all her attention in bringing him to the gate of Lowlevels. When she could extend her notice beyond his refractory ears, she became aware of an unexpected apparition—that of young Medland, looking surprisingly clean and tidy, and handling a loaded wheelbarrow as if he had been used to work all his life: which he certainly never had been to her knowledge. At the sight of the pony-carriage he ran with officious alacrity to open the gate and admit them into the drive.

"Who would have thought of seeing you here?" was Mrs. Salisbury's uncomplimentary remark, as he touched his cap. "I

heard your parents were very angry with Mr. Martin because they had not been kept on."

"So they was, ma'am; but Mr. Martin has been good enough to take me on trial. I hope to do better, please ma'am, now I have made a beginning."

"If you *have* made a beginning, I hope so too, but it strikes me I have heard you say so before. You should have let me know you were in service; I expected you yesterday to sweep the walks."

"I am sure, ma'am, if it will oblige you, I don't mind asking my master to let me run up to-morrow and do it."

"Oblige me! Nonsense. You are not the only man in the world who can handle a broom. I should like to know what induced Mr. Martin to engage you without a character."

"The hope of giving me one, ma'am."

"Oh, indeed! You seem to have your answers wonderfully ready: but that you always had. I wish I could see some good done, as well as talked about."

"Please, ma'am, here comes my master: he will tell you himself if he has any fault to find. He knows I have not tasted a drop of anything stronger than coffee since I have been in the house, and I feel so much happier, ma'am, that I've no temptation to run after any."

"I am glad to hear it," was the reply, and as Martin came forward to receive his visitors, they alighted from the carriage.

"You have not been round to Highlevels, as you promised, sir," she said, in that winning manner he had found so pleasant before, "and my granddaughter is quite disappointed. Your good-nature has never been forgotten, by her or me."

Martin bowed, and murmured something about being busy.

"You are making alterations, I suppose? May I go round the rooms, and look at them? I have not been in this house for a long while, and should be glad to refresh my memory."

It was not merely from kindness to Grace that she said this; she really had some curiosity to see the rooms again; and, declining his attendance, she left them to entertain each other. Martin, observing that Grace was almost too agitated to speak, took her into the dining-room and gave her a chair.

"Is anything wrong? Does Miss Kerr want me?"

"No, thank you. It's a letter I've had just now—from Lucy Have you heard anything from Mr. Bruce?"

"No; I have been looking out for a letter for some days."

"Then you don't know that he is gone to Dover?"

"Dover! That was a sudden move. What made him leave so soon?"

"The fire, I suppose."

"What fire?"

"Some fire there has been in the Mission schoolyard," said Grace, flurried by his manner, and referring nervously to her letter.

"Any lives lost? Anyone hurt? Where was Joel Treherne?"

"He seems to have been there. I will read you what she says. It is dated from the 'Lord Warden,' Dover.

"My own dear Grace,—I suppose you know all about our move from Miss Kerr, and the fright we had with the fire in the Mission schoolyard, which I can't make out the rights of, nor Joel either, and there's been more going on than I like to talk about, as I am not sure. Now it is all over, I am very glad we are here. The doctor said Mr. Bruce must not stay in town any longer, and Mr. and Mrs. Carroll came to fetch him away, and Miss Leicester was kind enough to take me, instead of Mrs. Ellis, as her maid. Mr. Bruce was very ill at first, but he is getting much better. I think they mean to be married directly after Easter, and perhaps they will go abroad, before they settle down at Lowlevels. Dear Grace, she told me she hoped that you and me would be her housemaid and cook, which will make me quite happy, if you are so too. People make me laugh when they talk about you and Mr. Jones—I know better. Dear Grace, if only I could see you as happy as I am, with my dear, dear Joel, who is the best man in the world, and the handsomest, I should have nothing more to wish, except that there were no wicked people in the world. Joel says it was a near thing, but they got the worst of it this time."

"Is that all?" asked Martin, as the reader paused.

"All but a few words, only meant for me," said Grace, who had really read straight on out of sheer nervousness, when she had intended only to select a sentence or two.

"Who is the Mr. Jones she mentions?"

"He brought me news of a friend of mine."

"Where does he come from?"

"Australia."

"Is he himself a friend of yours?"

Grace was silent for a few moments, before answering, "Yes."

"Grace," he said, looking earnestly at her, as she sat with drooping head before him, "Joel has no secrets from me, so you and I ought to be friends. What am I to think? Is this man's name Jones, really? or is he ——"

"Stop, stop, sir—don't ask me what I cannot answer. He is a man who has been dreadfully tried, and unjustly accused, and he trusts me; and I must not, and will not, betray his secrets."

"Do you think he had any hand in this fire?"

"I hope and trust not. He is not a housebreaker, or a thief—that I am quite sure of."

He looked at her thoughtfully for awhile, then walked up and down the room in silence.

"Do you know what happened in this house?" he asked, presently, as he stopped short before her. "Do you know that a poor young wife was frightened to death by the secret contrivances of some

prowling villains who were never found out? I am doing my best to fathom that mystery, and if it is tried again, it will be at more risk than it was before. But I would have you know this—there is a man dogging us, who hates Gabriel Bruce; and I strongly suspect he has taken the name of Jones on one occasion, if not on more. If we mean the same person—do your best to warn him off; for if he persists in trying to injure my friend, there is neither mission, nor church, nor priest, nor prayer, that shall stand between him and me. He has escaped me twice since we came to England—let him take care how he crosses me the third time!"

"Oh, Mr. Martin—you don't believe it is the same! You wouldn't judge an innocent man unheard, because of the name?"

"No, I wouldn't. But, Grace, if you are so sure of your friend's innocence, will you help me with a proof? I told you what I thought about that attempt at Mr. Bruce's door. Here is a witness." He took the fur cap out of a box in a corner of the room. "I give that into your charge. Find out for yourself if it is his, or not—and according to what you find, judge him and me."

She took the cap, but through her blinding tears she could hardly see what it was. Moved by her distress he began to say something about the possibility of a mistake, which gave her a momentary courage. "Oh, sir!" she said, clasping her hands, "you are a young gentleman, free and respected—I've heard you have lived a deal in the wilderness, like Abraham and Isaac, and so perhaps you don't know so much about the bad ways of town, and how men are tempted, if they once go wrong, to get worse and worse. But if you had ever been yourself or seen one you cared for in the case of Ishmael—his hand against every man, and every man's against him—and knew how dreadfully hard it was for him, so long as he was poor, to get a chance, or a hearing, or a good word, you would see there was some excuse even for the worst—and that anyone may he drawn into wickedness, if no hope is left him of ever doing better unless he first does something worse!"

Her tears choked her speech, and she did not see what a change had passed over Martin's face as he listened. She had struck a chord of whose power she knew nothing, and he had to command himself before he could reply. When he did, it was to observe, with a sarcasm intended to conceal his own emotion, that she had betrayed her secret.

"It is for no friend's messenger you are pleading like this. Whatever else he may be, he is the friend himself, Grace."

"Then," she said, bravely, standing up before him, "I have trusted you, sir, as I have not my own sister, nor yet Mr. Forrest; and I have put my life in your hands, Mr. Martin, but I know it is safe, for there never was a real gentleman yet as would turn a poor woman's words against herself if she went to him in her trouble. See now, sir, you have a friend you love—and no wonder, for he is a noble

young gentleman, and he is well to do, and everybody speaks in his praise, and the dearest lady in the land is to marry him—but if you saw him on the brink of some awful danger that might ruin him body and soul, wouldn't you try all you could to save him? I'm sure you would. And I may be, after all, making a great mistake, but somehow it seems borne in upon me that the man I know and you will come together some dreadful day, and what will come of it, God, Who pities us all, only knows. Oh sir! if in that day, whenever it comes, you will think of my words—if you'll only remember that if it is a good thing to hinder a man from doing wrong, it is grander still to help him to do right—if you'll be merciful—as merciful as you can—I will pray God to bless you in all you do, and that you may never know what it is to have a name you love held up to scorn and shame!"

"Woman!" he said, stamping on the floor as if in agony, "what makes you speak to me like that? Do you suppose no one has ever had anything to bear but yourself? There, poor soul, I'll do what I can. Don't break your heart beforehand; we may both be mistaken—but this I promise you, at any rate—I'll not betray your confidence, if you will deal fairly with mine. If you will watch on your part, and do your best to keep your man from crossing us, I, on mine, will not go out of my way to look for him: aye, and if we do meet, as you fear, I'll give him a chance, supposing I have one to give. But I am no gentleman, Grace, remember, and nothing will ever make me one now."

"Nothing will ever make you anything else while you behave as one," said Grace, fervently; and as Mrs. Salisbury's step was heard approaching, she wiped her eyes, and hid the fur cap under her shawl. The lady was impatient to get home, so Martin had only to hand her into her pony-carriage, and bow his acknowledgment of the civility with which she renewed her invitation to come and see Myra, who was always wishing to see him again. If allowed, he would walk over the next day, to inquire what news Miss Kerr had received.

"Do so," said Mrs. Salisbury, as she gathered up her reins. "And a word to the wise—take care how you trust your servant yonder, till you have given him a real trial."

"I don't trust him at all," said Martin.

He proved his words, for when he came to Highlevels the next morning he brought his satellite with him, as well as Settler, leaving them to wait for him outside. Orders had been given for his immediate introduction into the library, but he was so much earlier than had been expected, that Alice was still occupied, with Grace's assistance, in arranging her drawing-board and chair in the proper light for her sitter.

"Oh, is it you already, Mr. Martin? I am so glad to see you again! I want to know what you have heard, and to talk over what they tell me—it seems to have been the strangest affair, and poor

Grace, here, with her sister in the middle of it, is as anxious as anybody—no wonder. Do sit down, and tell us all you know."

"Perhaps you would like to read Mr. Bruce's letter, Miss Kerr? He says you will explain the beginning of it."

"Does he?" and Alice's cheeks flushed with delight, as she took the letter, and began to read aloud.

"Lord Warden Hotel, Dover, April.

"'Pends-toi, brave Crillon,' &c. Ask Miss Kerr to tell you the rest of the story, my dear Ironhand, and draw the moral for yourself."

She stopped to look at him with a smile. "Don't you know the story?"

"How should I? It is in some book, I suppose."

"It is told in the history of France that Henri IV. had a brave general, Crillon, and the king wrote to him after a battle that he had only to hang himself, as they had been fighting without him."

"I see. If hanging myself would make him safe I might be tempted to try. Can you tell me where that story is to be found, Miss Kerr?"

"I daresay I could find it for you among Miss Strahan's school books. I will ask Mrs. Salisbury presently."

"Thank you," said he, simply, as his eyes glanced at the well-filled shelves. "I wonder how long it would take to learn as much as you ladies know?"

"You would not be long in getting to the bottom of my learning, I assure you. One picks up a certain amount of names and dates and odd stories, in a scrambling way—but I do not really know anything."

He smiled—a rare, but pleasant smile, which illuminated his whole countenance.

"I was told the other day that to know we know nothing is a sign of wisdom."

"But I am not wise enough to say that, exactly. I know something about drawing. Do you?"

"Nothing whatever. I know a likeness when I see it."

"Then study Miss Strahan's while I read this letter, for she will be down in a few minutes, and the fire must not be mentioned in her hearing. Anything of the kind excites her too much."

"Poor child!" muttered he, as he turned to Alice's drawing-board, with the portrait in its half-finished stage—that bewitching period in water-colour drawing, when the imagination fills up what the brush has only suggested. It was already a remarkable likeness, and the strange effect of the old miserly keenness in the youthful face seemed to fascinate him strongly. As he stood musing over it, and the light which Alice had artistically arranged fell partly on his bent head, partly on the old armour and dark wood-carvings behind him, she could not help thinking what a picture he would make in himself.

Even Gabriel's letter was for the moment forgotten, while her quick fancy sketched out the design, and "the Squire's Vigil" rose before her complete. If she could but seize that expression, and represent him watching his armour, battered by gallant service, on the eve of the well-deserved accolade!—but the vision was dispelled by his looking round again, quietly remarking, "One would think you had lived among the gaming-tables. I never but once saw that look in a child's face, and then it was a boy."

"You must have seen many strange things, and people too, in your time," said Alice.

"Yes," he said, "I have: but nothing to what I meet with in books."

"What a curious sensation it must be, with everything quite fresh to read! I rather envy you, Mr. Martin."

His good-humoured bow and smile suddenly reminded her that she was, perhaps, assuming too much intimacy, considering that he was Mr. Bruce's servant, and she hid her confusion by returning to the letter. Grace, in consideration for her personal anxiety, was permitted to know the contents, as she had been longing to do all the while, and by comparing the several parts of the correspondence together, a general idea of the facts became clear to all three.

Gabriel Bruce had retired early to rest; and, finding Joel had not returned from his walk, had thrown himself, half-undressed, on his bed, and fallen asleep, leaving his window partly open—a habit of which Miss Thirza had tried to cure him in vain. From a troubled dream of camp life and forest wandering, and contending with a fire that was smothering him with smoke, he awoke to find the room filled with the smell of burning wood, and a man's hand laid on his chest. There was light enough still in the grate to show that he wore a fireman's helmet, though his features could hardly be distinguished; and as Gabriel attempted to rise, and asked what was the matter, a deep, forced voice assured him it was all right—there was a fire, but he was not to be frightened—he and his mate would get him out by the window. The mate was looking in as he spoke, and the shouting in the street below confirmed his words. Gabriel thought directly of the others—and peremptorily desired that he might be left to take care of himself, while they ran to help the women and children.

"We must obey orders," was the only reply, and in a moment the blanket was flung round his person, and strapped down with a leather belt, so as to pinion his arms. It was done before the startled convalescent, whose pulse was still fluttering from his being so suddenly aroused, had time to think, or to utter a sound.

"Now then, Captain," hissed a voice in his ear, "no harm is meant you, and none will be done, if you are quiet; but I want that trinket you wear round your neck, and I mean to have it this time."

He had a strong pair of pincers in his hand, and was fumbling at Bruce's throat; but, to his evident exasperation, no chain was there. Unknown to anyone, Edith had implored him to trust her

with it while he was still so weak, and she was wearing it at that moment. An utterance of rage, almost like the snarl of a wild beast, burst from the robber's lips; and at the same instant came a shriek from outside—such as sent the blood surging in Bruce's veins, and almost gave him strength to break his bonds. It was Edith's voice, and in the agony of believing her to be in danger close by, he writhed himself from under the grasp of his enemy, and fell heavily on the floor. The second man had come to his comrade's assistance, but of what happened then Gabriel knew little. Some one burst in upon them all, and the whole room seemed filled with confusion.

Miss Leicester's evidence supplied the gap. She had been startled, while writing letters, by the sudden glare of light and smell of burning, and, of course, her first thought was of her invalid over the way. When she opened her window the ladder was standing at his, opposite, and at first the disguise of the men deceived her also, especially as, when Joel rushed up the street, the man on the look-out hailed him, and bade him hold the ladder, for they must bring the gentleman down. But fortunately her sight was remarkably keen, and she detected the struggle within the room, and her scream of warning to Joel quickly changed the aspect of affairs. The Cornishman charged up the ladder as if he had been leading a forlorn hope, and his right-and-left sledge-hammer blows sent one adversary out of the window he had just entered, and the other, after a short, but fierce struggle, flying down the stairs. For pursuit of either he had no time, as Gabriel's condition required all his care; the costume of the Fire Brigade proved their safeguard, and they escaped, with no severer punishment than his onset had inflicted—and the defeat of their manifest design. Joel believed that he must have done them some little damage; he remembered a crash or so, and giving one fellow's wrist a wrench that nearly twisted his hand off; but he could only conjecture who they were, and could not have sworn to either. The fire was got under in an hour or two, and its origin was a mystery still. What was of most immediate importance was the state of Mr. Bruce's health, which had compelled the party in Greville Gardens to take up their quarters with him at the Lord Warden; where the quiet and the sea air were reviving his strength. Further details were reserved for another opportunity, which, as Edith intimated, would not be long in occurring. They were quietly arranging their plans, and no scheme, however happy, would be perfect in which Alice was not included. There was a deep tone of happiness in the latter part of the letter, the thankfulness for the escape overpowering all the indignation at the attempt. Those who read of it at a distance, however, did not quite share the feeling—and Martin scanned every line to see if a word was said to point out the perpetrators of the deed. When he took his leave, he found his servitor outside the lodge, coolly smoking a cigar.

"Where did you get that?" he demanded, as Settler rose and fawned on him.

"A decent sort of man asked his way just now, and we had a chat on one thing and another, and he gave me a couple of these."

"What sort of man was he? You had better take care how you make friends with strangers on the high road, Medland."

"Of course, sir, but I'm all right there; I've a pretty good notion what his sort is—he let it out as we were talking. He's one of the London police, and has met with an accident on the line, for his hand was in a splinter. Would you try one of his cigars, sir? He seemed a very decent sort of man."

(*To be continued.*)

NIGHT AND MORNING.

OUT in the cold, the darkness, the despair,
Out on the desert waste, unloved, alone;
For thee no sun, no warm-encircling air;
For others, bread; for thee, poor child, a stone.

For others, all the glitter and the gold,
A pathway strewn with roses for their feet;
For thee, black night upon the dreary wold,
The bitter piercing wind, the driving sleet.

Storm-beaten lilies clinging round thy heart,
Dead flowers of Hope, which sprang in happier years,
While spectral forms of Memory round thee start,
And mock with hollow laughter at thy tears.

Bear up, sad heart, bear up a little while!
Has not the Master said it? He will come.
Soon shalt thou bask beneath thy Father's smile,
Safe in the shelter of thy Father's Home.

A pleading voice comes stealing up the vale,
The Valley of the Shadow, sweet its tone:
Be not afraid, my trembling child, nor quail;
Canst thou not watch one hour with me alone?

The night is now far spent, the day at hand,
The red dawn slowly creeps across the sea;
Soon shall thine eyes behold the Morning Land,
Full in the sunlight of the Life to be!

A sound of rustling wings, the East aglow:
"Good morning" greetings from an angel band:
Through gates flung open wide comes, sweet and low,
A strain of welcome from the Spirit Land.

E. L.

ALEXANDER POPE.

IN the days when James II. was making vows to the saints every morning and breaking his coronation oath to his subjects every afternoon, there was in Lombard Street a large prosperous draper's shop. It was a place remarkable for drawing together around its door a vast number of chairs and coaches; a place outside which the unwashed many used to stand to stare at the rich brocade and velvet doublets of the polished perfumed few; a place uncomfortably connected in the minds of fathers and husbands with long bills; but a place that no imagination, however wild and extravagant, had dreamt of associating with poetry. Yet there a poet was born.

The year of the birth of the linendraper's son, Alexander Pope, was that of King James's abdication. The Popes were Roman Catholics, and many must have been the indignant lament breathed round the child's cradle over the King driven from his father's throne, over the fair young Queen flying through the chill night with the baby heir of ancient princes clasped to her breast, over the gorgeous robe of the priest eclipsed by the black gown of the parson. These household murmurs, and the animosity which was displayed at that time by the two great political parties that divided the land against each other, and which penetrated even into the calm of private life, may very likely first have given that turn for sharp controversy to the mind of the embryo poet which characterised it so strongly in after days.

The fortunes of Pope the father throve well on silk and velvet. No doubt there was a mental power in the family, which in the son worked its way to the surface in the higher form of poetical genius, but which in the father limited itself to making him a successful tradesman. At a comparatively early age, and while his boy was still very young, Mr. Pope had realised enough capital to enable him to give up the shop, to leave the noise and smoke of the metropolis, and to retire to a pretty little house, nine miles from Windsor, on the borders of the forest.

It was a quiet, shadowy place, full of the murmur of trees and whisper of grass, surrounded by the incense of wild flowers, and awakened at dawn by a chorus of birds. A fit home it was, in truth, for a young poet; and there, as might be expected, Pope's mind early grew to understand something of what was its appointed work in the world.

Fragile and sickly from his earliest years, the boy, when other lads of his age would have been climbing the trees, or running after the rabbits, or turning the oaks into giants with whom to fight, spent his time in wandering among the tall stems, book in hand, or lying in a waking dream, gazing up at the tremulous arch of green overhead.

At length, out of these long hours of solitude and self-communing, his mind gradually evolved the idea that it wanted to give expression to something which was hidden within it; and while still little more than a child, he wrote his first poetry.

Pope's education was first carried on by Bannister, a Roman Catholic priest, who breathed into him a strong affection for his father's form of faith, and grounded him well in Greek and Latin.

After a time he was sent to a school at Twyford, and there he had his first experience of mixing with and working among his fellows. He does not seem to have especially distinguished himself at school; perhaps his weak health kept him back. Nor does he appear to have made any very lasting school friendships; very likely his lonely life in the forest made him rather shy and unsociable with his companions. At school he made several short translations into English verse of classical authors, a fit apprenticeship for what he would have to do in after days.

On leaving Twyford he was very quickly launched into the middle of London life. That world in which the lad in his teens now found himself seems to us a strange world as we glance back at it with our modern eyes.

In the first place, there was the court. The chief person there was a woman with a small share of beauty, a small share of brains, and a small share of heart. But all these scanty proportions of good things made up a Queen, and therefore, in future years, young Alexander Pope was to style her "great Anne," in his verse.

Close by the throne there stood another woman, who ruled the Queen's mind a good deal more than the Queen did herself, whether the matter in hand were the choice of a dress or the signing of a death warrant. Everything about that lady was bright; her eyes were bright, and so were her complexion and her intellect, and yet there was one dark spot within, which would occasionally show itself outside plainly enough. She had a temper that would often make that fair face as black as night. She—the Duchess of Marlborough—was a stately court lady enough now, but there had been days (so it was whispered in high circles) when Sarah Jennings and her no less beautiful sister Frances had been fond of such pranks as going about the town dressed up as orange-girls. There, too, was Sarah's lord, the great Duke, the man of highest military genius and meanest avarice, the man who entertained princes, and haggled with costermongers about the price of a bundle of greens. Harley was among the throng, cool, cautious, impenetrable, biding his time, already perhaps forecasting what one day he was to be.

Some men at that court were men with double lives. Their bodies were in England doing homage to Queen Anne, their hearts and souls were far away with an exiled prince in a foreign land. There were other men there whose whole beings were aflame, burning for Protestantism and freedom.

Such was the aspect of the court.

Then there was the stage, which formed so conspicuous a feature in the London of that day, the reigning star of which had a larger court round him or her than Queen Anne herself; on which rivalry and jealousy rose so high that one actress carried a real dagger on to the boards to stab a personal enemy in a mimic struggle; the stage, with its open battle-field for genius, its sudden leaps to fame, its stormy sea of fickle public favour, where many a young aspiring hope went down. No doubt one of young Pope's first London experiences was going to a play.

The ladies intrigued about everything, from hearts to cards, and rustled in wide hoops to masquerades and routs, and were carried off now and then by ardent lovers, and were not displeased when they were. The young gallants swaggered through the streets with their rapiers at their sides, and were as ready for a duel as for dinner. The clergy dusted the costly volumes in their cosy libraries, and polished their sermons, but left the lives and consciences of their parishioners as black as they chose to make them.

No one dared set a foot a yard beyond the busier parts of the city after twilight. Highwaymen were nearly as plentiful as honest men; and though these robbers could be chivalrous at times, it was not exactly a pleasant thing to fall into their hands.

Every profession had its own coffee-house. There was the soldiers' coffee-house, and the attorneys', and the poets'; and of course it was young Alexander Pope's first ambition to be admitted to this latter.

By some fortunate chance he was, soon after he came to London, introduced to Dryden—"Glorious John!" We speak the words, and as we speak them the old shrunk figure in the black suit, with the gold snuff-box and the grand air, rises up before us. He was a true prince among the English poets of that day, however little our modern taste may confirm the lofty title.

Naturally enough, Dryden became for awhile the god of young Pope's idolatry. Corneille and Racine were the gods of Dryden's idolatry, and Corneille's and Racine's gods were the classical writers. Therefore Alexander Pope's first published poems were of course written in heroics after a strictly classical pattern. The heroics he clung to till the end of his life; but he soon learned to put into them true English manly sense and feeling, and to colour them with the especial hue of his own bright genius.

Pope's first appearance in print was made in some pastoral poems which were published when he was twenty-one. His next and more important work was the "Essay on Criticism." This latter was inspired by Boileau, who was always writing about the art of writing, but Pope made it his own by much keen thought and clear judgment. Its tone is, in spite of its theme, kindly in the main, and it has in it that line which is one of the most beautiful that he ever wrote—

To err is human, to forgive divine.

The "Essay on Criticism" was received with some favour by the reading public, and put its author at once on the list of living English poets.

Having thus firmly planted his foot on the first step of the ladder of fame, young Pope's next bounden duty as a poet was to fall in love. This he soon did thoroughly enough.

At Maple Durham, near Reading, there lived a Roman Catholic gentleman named Blount, with his two daughters, Theresa and Martha. The Popes became acquainted with them, and religious and political sympathies soon drew the two families closely together. The result of this intimacy was that Alexander Pope and the youngest Miss Blount fell in love with each other. Why this attachment never ripened into matrimony is the great mystery of Pope's life. Several points in his after-story show that the affection on his side must have been a very lasting and strong one. His name was never, as far as we know, connected as a lover with that of any other woman. The morning after his father died he wrote to Martha Blount that even at such a time as this he thought of her, and that surely this was the best proof of his love. At his own death he left her a considerable part of his fortune.

As for Martha, the poet's homage seems to have been very well received by her. Why, then, did no closer tie than that of friendship ever join those two lives? That is a question which can never be positively answered. The most likely solution of the riddle, however, seems to us to be that the extreme weakness of Pope's health, and the especial uncertainty of life caused by it, made him resolve never to marry. He loved Martha too well to make her either a constant nurse or a young widow, and so he contented himself with keeping her for a life-long friend.

But to return to Pope at twenty-one.

The success of the "Essay on Criticism" decided his part in life. From that time forward literature became his profession; but we suspect that for some years the money made in the draper's shop in Lombard Street materially helped in the young poet's housekeeping. His parents now left the old forest home, and came to live at Chiswick. No doubt they did this to be nearer their son, and probably some of his time was spent with them.

And now there rises up before us a scene with which the name of Alexander Pope (little as the actors in it dreamed of the fact) was to be connected for all time. In the drawing-room of a large London house sits a young lady. She has a pretty, piquante face, but the most striking of her charms is a profusion of fair hair, two or three ringlets of which, according to the fashion of the day, hang down her back. She is doing her best to be interested in a garden of silken flowers which she is creating on her embroidery frame. Every now and then, however, her rosy mouth is distorted by what is very like a suppressed yawn. Little wonder that she finds it dull. It is

a rainy afternoon, and she cannot go out; for as yet not even a foreshadowing of such a garment as a lady's waterproof has appeared in the land. She has no fancy for reading, because it is not a thing that is often done by a young gentlewoman, and this embroidery grows somewhat weary work, when one sits over it from breakfast to dinner and from dinner to supper.

By-and-by, a tall, well-built, manly figure comes down the street past the window. There is life enough in the young lady's eyes now, and her cheeks are redder than the silk in her work-basket. An instant after, a young man with a free, bold, joyous air is bowing over her hand. He sits down beside her, and a volley of lively talk begins between them. Compliments come from his lips as quickly as eggs from a conjurer's bag, but they wrangle a little too.

After a while the young gentleman's eyes begin to fix themselves more upon the lady's hair than upon her face, but she goes on chatting merrily and does not notice this. A pair of scissors are lying on her work-table; he takes them up and plays with them, as it seems to her, carelessly. He now almost imperceptibly slides his chair a little behind hers. The movement is so slight and gradual that she does not observe it. She is bending again over her work, picking out one or two false stitches, and is not looking at him. Talking all the while more busily than ever, and with sweeter words upon his lips than before, he raises the scissors which he still holds in his hand as if he meant to use them somewhere in good earnest, and as he does so a mischievous smile twinkles for a moment round his mouth. Do we see rightly? Yes; slowly, stealthily, the scissors are advancing towards a bright devoted lock, and an instant after, the prize is severed from the little head, and waves triumphantly in his grasp.

What words can tell the shrillness of her scream? What colours paint the wrath in her eyes?

He makes his way as quickly as he can out of the house, but next day he comes to try to make peace. There is no more peace, however, between Lord Petre and Arabella Fermor, or between the most petrified maiden aunts and distant country cousins on either side. The two families will never speak to each other again.

On this incident in real life Pope founded "The Rape of the Lock." Its mixture of delicate fairy work with common life—of good-humoured satire with that wholesome teaching which is embodied in Clarissa's speech—made the poem at once leap into public favour. It went rapidly through three editions. This may seem but a small success to our modern ideas, but it was a great one in that day. Pope's reputation as a poet rose very much with "The Rape of the Lock," and his literary brethren now began to glance at him with jealous eyes. From that time forward he seems throughout almost his whole life to have been at intervals engaged in a paper skirmish with one man of letters after another. The cause of this it is very

difficult exactly to define. Political differences may have had a great deal to do with it, for in those days Whigs and Tories hated each other with a most righteous hatred, which displayed itself in everything—in literature, in the street songs, in the very colours worn by the ladies. Perhaps, also, Pope's manner was characterised by something of self-conceit and arrogance. We can well believe that this latter was the case from what we gather from the tone of his writings.

Be this as it might, Pope was certainly no favourite among the other authors of the day. There was Ambrose Phillips, a man of moderate intellect, who wrote middling poetry, against whom Pope, on account of some personal dislike, hurled the sharpest darts of his satire. There were Addison and Steele, both of them too great in themselves and too kindly-natured to show any very fierce animosity against a man who was, they knew, a man of genius, but with whom, nevertheless, they always stood on the defensive. There was Tickell, Addison's friend and follower, who, like all disciples, was much more bitter than his master. There was Cibber, who imitated Pope's manner when he acted in the "Rehearsal." All these received their full dues for their shortcomings against Mr. Alexander Pope when he wrote the Dunciad.

Pope's next great work was his translation of the Iliad. It is the fashion in these days to run down this translation, but we question whether Homer will ever reach an English ear more musically than as interpreted by Pope. Cowper and Lord Derby are, it is true, more literal, but he gives the sense quite as fully as they do.

At about the same time that he translated the Iliad, Pope edited an edition of Shakespeare. Pope did not appreciate Shakespeare. Very likely he thought himself quite as great a poet as he was. But in those days no one in the slightest degree understood the author of "Hamlet," and it is therefore something to Pope's credit that, at a time when the highest treasure of national literature was neglected, he did a little to throw light upon it. The edition of Shakespeare paid Pope scantily, but the translation of the Iliad made his fortune. The first thing he did with his money was to buy a villa at Twickenham. There he established himself with old Mrs. Pope, who was now a widow. Nothing can be more harmonious and charming than the relationship which always existed between Pope and his mother: from boyhood to late on in middle age she was his most constant and sympathetic friend.

Pope employed himself in his new country home in a way which savours more of the cockney than of one brought up in the forest. From the villa to some ground which belonged to it on the other side of the road there ran an underground passage. This Pope delighted in turning into a spacious grotto, which he filled with all kinds of wonderful toys. There were piles of mimic rocks, from which trickled threads of water that called themselves fountains;

there were winding labyrinths which ended in nothing; there were secret niches with damp seats in them on which no one could rest. All these things were the joy of Pope's heart; but probably they were not by any means the joy of those friends who laid up for themselves large stores of cold and rheumatism as, compelled by stern civility, they wandered with the poet through his chosen bower.

Pope's Twickenham villa, which was shown to the public for a long while after his death, is not now standing, but we know it well through description, and bright, calm pictures of his life rise up before us. There was the window at which he sat writing, while the heavy barges, or pleasure boats, with their many-tinted freights of gaily-dressed ladies, glided past, up and down the shining river. There was the pretty garden where he walked to and fro in the summer moonlight, and thought, perhaps, with a sigh of Martha Blount, and of what might have been. There was the comfortable parlour (parlour was the generic word for a sitting-room in those days) where in the winter firelight he and his mother sat talking of the town gossip which the old lady had picked up during the day, as she toddled from neighbour to neighbour.

The first thing Pope was busy with in literature in his country house was the translation of the Odyssey. Now, there exists a popular belief, which is current even among well-read people, that this translation was the work of Pope's brain and hand alone; but the truth is that two other men, Broome and Fenton, were associated with him in it. The knack of writing heroic lines which run smoothly enough is not a very difficult one to acquire, if a man has a cultivated taste and an ear for musical rhyme. Broome and Fenton were educated men with a certain talent for verse making, and thus they managed to do their work so well that, when it had been touched here and there by the magic wand of Pope's genius, it passed for his.

The translation of the Odyssey paid yet better than that of the Iliad. The classics were then the fashion, and an English version of a great classic thus tunefully rendered could not fail in those days to sell well. Poor Broome and Fenton, however, got but small shares of the spoil. Love of money was one of the worst faults in Pope's character; and the niggardly way in which he rewarded the two men who had been the faithful helpers of his labour must always be a stain upon his name.

In the latter part of Pope's life he was surrounded much by the vague scepticism which in the eighteenth century came over from France to England. He did his best to contend against it by writing the "Essay on Man."

Pope lived to old age, and kept his position in the estimation of his intellectual countrymen till the last. In our days his poetry has gone out of fashion, but not the less for that will the name of Alexander Pope be a name for English men and women in all time.

Alice King.

LADY CARAMEL'S GARDEN PARTY.

"IT will be a lovely afternoon," observed Rose Leslie to her sister Mabel, as they stood looking out of the window of their pretty drawing-room in Queen Street, Mayfair; "not a chance of rain. I hope mamma will be able to take us."

"I think she will," said Mabel. "Her headache was better after breakfast, and a drive in the open carriage will do her good. Besides, I know she is anxious to go; for this is the second time the Caramels have asked us, and it will seem so strange if we always refuse. Not that I imagine it will be very amusing. Those crushes seldom are."

"It will give us a breath of country air, at all events," said Rose; "and be a change from that eternal Row and the ices at Gunter's."

"We shan't escape Gunter, whether we go or stay," laughingly retorted Mabel. "And if we come across nothing worse than his pine-apple creams, we shall do very well. Provided that horrid Laura Lynx isn't there to listen to every word one says."

"And provided other people are, which is more to the purpose," slily remarked Rose.

"Who knows, Mabel dear, but one of us may meet her fate this afternoon!"

"Speak for yourself, Rose," said her sister; "but please don't use that abominable country-house phrase; it sounds like going to the scaffold, and I don't suppose marriage is as bad as that. Even if it is, we are not likely to be among the victims, unless ——"

"Unless two gentlemen, who shall be nameless," suggested Rose, "make up their minds that nice-looking girls—and we are *that*—though they *have* only five thousand pounds apiece, are more to their taste than Lucy Caramel with ten thousand, or that odious Priscilla Jenkinson with twenty. Well, qui vivra verra, and perhaps sooner than we think. If Lionel were not so dreadfully shy!"

"And Augustus so deplorably jealous!" sighed Mabel. "What is it, Jane?"

"Please, miss," answered the handmaid, whose entrance had interrupted the conversation, "the barouche is ordered at three, and your mamma says you have only just time to dress."

While they are preparing for their excursion, a few words respecting the social position of the young ladies whose confidential chat we have somewhat unwarrantably been listening to, will not be out of place. They were the daughters of General Leslie, at whose death, some two or three years back, their mother had taken and furnished the house in Queen Street, for the purpose of introducing Mabel and Rose into society. Their brother Edward, who had followed his

father's profession, and to whose share the greater part of the paternal inheritance had naturally fallen, was quartered with his regiment at Aldershot, and having apartments of his own in Jermyn Street, in no wise interfered with the domestic arrangements of the family. Mrs. Leslie, although occasionally an invalid, was an indefatigable chaperon, gave nice little dinners, and, being as particular in the choice of her guests as her chef was in the composition of his menus, succeeded in assembling round her table a select circle of intimates, including some of the best and most agreeable people in town. To many of these her really charming daughters were doubtless the chief magnets of attraction: both were extremely pretty, though in totally different styles; Mabel, the eldest, being as decided a brunette as her sister was undeniably blonde. Each had her admirers, some captivated by the aristocratic beauty of Mabel, others by the graceful piquancy of the blue-eyed Rose; but their assiduities were mainly confined to those harmless attentions which mean nothing, and which every good-looking girl who dresses and dances well has an indisputable right to command.

There were, however, two exceptions to the general rule, whose pretensions, though not so exactly defined as might have been wished, it would be doing them an injustice to confound with those entertained by the ordinary run of waltz-seekers and cloak-fetchers; and these were the Honourable Augustus Carlton, eldest son of Lord Harbury, and Captain Lionel Tremayne, of the Rifle Brigade. The first-named being in all respects an excellent *parti*, was naturally a great card in the eyes of mothers with marriageable daughters, by many of whom, indeed, he was already regarded as their especial property, notwithstanding what they persisted in terming his inconceivable flirtation with Mabel Leslie; for it was an undoubted fact that during the entire season he had not only been a constant visitor in Queen Street, but had on all possible occasions shown himself so exclusively devoted to the young lady in question, that, setting aside the rival aspirants and their mammas, professedly incredulous to the last, the usual hymeneal announcement in the *Morning Post* would have surprised nobody. Unfortunately, as before hinted by Mabel, such was his innate jealousy of disposition that, in spite of the utmost circumspection on her part, their mutual attachment was perpetually embittered by trifling disputes originating in his absurd fears and fancies, never of long duration, it is true, but still sufficiently frequent to retard—if not altogether prevent—any formal declaration of his intentions.

Of Captain Tremayne, the nephew and presumptive heir of a wealthy Cornish squire, and Carlton's intimate friend, all we need say is that he was a gallant soldier, thoroughly devoted to Rosie, but so painfully timid in her presence that although she was perfectly aware that he loved her—a feeling which she sincerely reciprocated—he had never as yet been able to summon up courage to tell her so; and the position of our heroines vis-à-vis their sweethearts having been thus

explained, we may conscientiously shift the scene to "The Cedars," Lady Caramel's pleasantly situated villa at Roehampton.

Sir Marmaduke Caramel, the representative at the period to which we allude of one of the oldest baronetcies in England, possessed, beyond his title and a fair average rent-roll, no personal characteristic worthy of particular mention, being a fussy, insignificant little man, a mere cipher in the establishment presided over by his wife, and graced by the somewhat mature attractions of his two daughters, Honoria and Lucy. His sole redeeming quality, indeed, was the antiquity of his family tree; but as this prestige, backed up by the incontestably blue blood of Milady, niece of the Earl of Mount Snowdon, amply sufficed, in the eyes of the world, to atone for all minor deficiencies, the owner of "The Cedars" and No. 99, Grosvenor Square, could very well afford to follow the example of King Louis Philippe, "qui régnait, mais ne gouvernait pas." He had the less reason to complain of his own nonentity, the direction of the ménage being in excellent hands; Lady Caramel, besides exercising a careful supervision over the financial department, having succeeded, by dint of tact and perseverance, in rendering her receptions in town and her garden parties at the villa excessively recherchées, and accessible only to the cream of London society. The chief care of her life—for even she had her troubles—was an ardent and hitherto unfulfilled desire to see at least one of her daughters advantageously married; and this hope, as far as it concerned Miss Honoria, a gaunt and rather forbidding damsel of thirty-two, waxed fainter and fainter every year. There was still, however, a chance for her sister Lucy, who, though closely bordering on Balzac's favourite age for women, hardly looked more than five-and-twenty, a privilege she owed to a tolerably good complexion and a trimly proportioned figure; and the unconscious individual selected by maternal forethought as the future bridegroom was no other than the Honourable Augustus Carlton. That gentleman's devotion to Mabel was certainly a drawback, but then Guzman feared no obstacles, and why should Lady Caramel? So that when Miss Lucy innocently asked her mother on the morning of the fête what could have induced her to invite those Leslie girls, she was quietly reminded that if they didn't come, Augustus wouldn't, and that of two evils it was better to choose the least.

Four o'clock was on the point of striking when the first detachment of guests arrived at "The Cedars;" and from that moment an uninterrupted procession of carriages, passing in turn through the gates, deposited their occupants at the entrance door of the villa. The afternoon was sultry, and as few cared to remain longer in the house than was absolutely necessary, the spacious and admirably laid out gardens were soon thronged with visitors, the gay dresses of the ladies contrasting picturesquely with the sombre old trees to which the property owed its name. Refreshment tents had been erected in

a shady part of the grounds; near them a band of musicians had already commenced a series of anti-Wagnerian melodies, while the inevitable lawn tennis and croquet attracted to the smoothly-kept turf a few enthusiastic amateurs, undeterred by the scorching rays of the sun. The majority, however, of the company were scattered about in groups on the extensive lawn, admiring the magnificent display of flowers, Lady Caramel's peculiar pride and boast; and among these were Mrs. Leslie and her two daughters, beside the youngest of whom stood a tall, soldierlike man, stealing a glance at her every now and then, and nervously fingering his moustache when he imagined that anyone was watching him. Meanwhile, a rather pert-looking and very much over-dressed damsel, followed by an elderly lady, had joined the party; these were Miss Laura Lynx and her chaperon, Mrs. Mandeville. When the former had shaken hands with Mrs. Leslie, she took Mabel aside, and with a sly twinkle of her eye in the direction of Rosie's admirer, asked her in a whisper:

"When is it to be?"

"When is what to be?" was Mabel's counter-query.

"As if one were as blind as a bat, not to see how the land lies!" retorted Miss Lynx. "Well, I'm sure it is time he did speak out, unless he thinks it is Leap-year, and is waiting for Rose to begin. By-the-bye, Mabel dear," continued the young lady, with a malicious air of commiseration, "you must make up your mind to play second fiddle to day, for Lucy Caramel has managed to get the start of you, and seems inclined to keep Augustus Carlton all to herself. I am afraid he is an awful flirt, for they do say that he was in Mrs. Jenkinson's box at the opera on Saturday, and *very* attentive to Priscilla. I was so sorry, darling, when I heard it, you can't imagine, for I really thought ——"

What Miss Lynx thought was only known to herself, for having attained her object of making Mabel as uncomfortable as possible, she hastened to respond to an imaginary sign of her chaperon, and sailed away to perform a similar good office in some other quarter, precisely as the gentleman on whose enormities she had been expatiating, approached, apparently not in the brightest of humours.

"Where have you been hiding yourselves?" asked Mr. Carlton, advancing towards Mabel, and only just touching her proffered hand; "have you been alone all this time?"

"It is not so easy to be alone at a garden party," quietly replied Miss Leslie; "but, for my part, I have hardly spoken to a soul except Captain Tremayne and Laura Lynx."

"Atrocious little mischief-maker!" exclaimed the Honourable Augustus, with a look of intense disgust. "What has she been saying? Something spiteful, of course?"

"Nothing very agreeable, certainly," answered poor Mabel, biting her lips at the recollection of Priscilla Jenkinson and the opera box.

"She told me yesterday," abruptly broke out Mr. Carlton, "that Sweepstake had been seen talking to you in the Row."

Mabel laughed. "She was right for once; he did stop our carriage to tell us about Myra Lascelles, who has made so bad a book for Goodwood, that whichever horse wins she is sure to lose."

"Was that all?" inquired her lover, evidently much relieved.

"Every syllable."

"Come this way, then," said Carlton. "I have something to say to you. Mrs. Leslie," he added in a louder tone, "I want to show Miss Mabel a wonderful specimen of the cactus, with a terribly unpronounceable name which I forget, but so perfectly hideous that our hostess is quite proud of it."

This ingenious manœuvre was, however, unexpectedly thwarted by the sudden appearance of the lady in question, accompanied by her youngest daughter, and a stiff, ungainly personage with a clove carnation in his button-hole.

"My dear Mrs. Leslie," said Lady Caramel, "I hope you are not fatiguing yourself. I am sure you must require some refreshment, and Mr. Wattles, who is most anxious to be introduced to you (here the stiff man bowed and blushed simultaneously) will be delighted to escort you to the tent. A protégé of Mrs. Lexington Huxtable, and enormously rich," she whispered to Mabel. "Mr. Carlton," she continued, turning to that gentleman, who was looking daggers at the unconscious Wattles, "do help Lucy to make up a party at croquet; no one understands these matters as well as you do."

There was no help for it; so Augustus, though with a very ill grace, reluctantly marched off with his smiling charge towards the croquet-ground, situated at the further extremity of the lawn; while her ladyship, having accomplished her project of separating the lovers, left Mr. Wattles to stay with his new acquaintances or not, just as he pleased, and returned to her post at the other end of the garden, where Honoria, during her absence, had been playing the part of chatelaine.

As for Captain Tremayne, any attempt to move him from Rosie's side would have been labour lost; but though he hemmed and hawed a good deal, and listened approvingly to his companion's lively sallies, he seemed as far from coming to the point as ever; and the young lady was beginning to find the tête-à-tête rather uphill work, when it was interrupted by a cheery voice exclaiming at her elbow,

"How d'ye do, Miss Rose? How are you, Tremayne?"

The speaker was the already mentioned Mr. Sweepstake, a prominent member of the Jockey Club, and a great favourite with ladies in general and with the Leslie family in particular. As he passed Tremayne he whispered in his ear, "I've done it at last, old man!"

"Done what?"

"Hush! Proposed to Priscilla Jenkinson, and been accepted, not half an hour ago."

"No!" ejaculated the Captain, staring at him with unfeigned admiration; then muttered to himself in an undertone: "How the deuce did he do it?"

"What are you two gentlemen whispering about so mysteriously?" asked Rose.

"That we never saw you look so charming," gallantly but untruly replied Sweepstake. "There can be but one opinion on that point, eh, Tremayne?"

"No doubt; yes, certainly, by all means," incoherently stammered the individual addressed; after which explosion, as if alarmed at his own temerity, he subsided at once into his normal state of placid torpor.

"Shall I tell you a good story, Miss Rose?" said Sweepstake, who appeared to be in an unusually talkative humour.

"Oh, do!" was her very natural reply.

"Well, then, you know Naseweis, of the German embassy?"

"Of course," she answered. "The best waltzer in London."

"First-rate hand at whist," murmured Tremayne.

"Described to a T," observed Miss Jenkinson's betrothed. "What do you think happened to him last night? He was asked to dine at old Lady Fitzmaurice's, and had accepted the invitation, when Gayford of the Blues sent him a reminder that he had already engaged himself to meet a lot of fellows at his club on the same evening. Naseweis wouldn't have missed Gayford's spread for all the old ladies in Christendom, but he couldn't positively throw over the Fitzmaurice, so how do you suppose he managed it? He went to Curzon Street at the appointed hour, took his hostess in to dinner, and made himself very agreeable while the soup was in progress. Just as they were handing round the fish, the butler brought him a note, which, after the usual apologies, he opened; appeared horror-struck at its contents, and rose from his chair, telling Lady Fitzmaurice that he was summoned to the bedside of an intimate friend, who was not expected to live through the night; and with many excuses for his unavoidable departure, left the room, and in another quarter of an hour was comfortably seated at Gayford's table."

"Very rude of him, in my opinion," observed Rose.

"And a very bad speculation, as it turned out," said Sweepstake; "for they sat down to whist after dinner, and the Herr Baron lost every rubber!"

As the narrator finished his anecdote, he caught a glimpse in the distance of the humming-bird which, with divers supplementary floral excrescences, decorated Miss Priscilla's hat, and hastily took his leave. Tremayne, who during the last five minutes had been fidgeting to and fro, suddenly turned to Rose, and said a few words which brought a flush into her pretty cheeks. What these words were it would be indiscreet to inquire, but the result was a protracted conversation in one of the secluded alleys of the garden, from whence

they emerged just as Mrs. Leslie, weary of listening to Mr. Wattles' platitudes, was wondering what had become of them. However, there they were, the young lady looking the picture of happiness, and her companion, contrary to his wont, in such remarkably buoyant spirits that Laura Lynx, who had sidled up to the group in the hope of fascinating Mrs. Lexington Huxtable's protégé, at once set him down as a victim to Lady Caramel's champagne. A whisper from Rose to her mother soon explained matters; and Mr. Wattles having opportunely yielded to Miss Lynx's advances, and been whisked away by that enterprising maiden, Mrs. Leslie proceeded to communicate the news to Mabel, who, with the patience of a martyr, had for the last half-hour been enduring the combined gallantries of old Lord Matlock with his ear-trumpet, and the no less prosy Sir Marmaduke Caramel.

At this juncture Tremayne, feeling himself de trop in the family conclave, started off in quest of his friend Augustus; and after sundry ineffectual researches finally discovered that gentleman seated in one of the refreshment tents, completely exhausted, and absorbing, with the zest of a man who had fairly earned it, his second tumbler of iced Badminton.

"Here you are, by Jove!" exclaimed the Captain. "I've been looking for you everywhere."

"Except in the right place," coolly replied Mr. Carlton. "Do you know what the thermometer stands at in the sun at this very moment?"

"Not I," replied Tremayne, considerably astonished at the question.

"Eighty-six. Nice temperature for lawn tennis, isn't it? Well, thanks to Miss Lucy Caramel and two equally insane individuals, such has been my enviable occupation since I saw you. That girl must be made of cast-iron—nothing else would stand it."

"I thought you were on the croquet-ground," said Tremayne.

"Incidit in Scyllam, cupiens vitare Charybdim," groaned Augustus. "That's about my case. But you're not listening: what on earth is the matter with you?"

"I'll tell you what it is," burst out the Captain, unable any longer to contain himself; "I'm the happiest fellow in the world, that's all."

"Why, you don't mean to say you have proposed?"

Tremayne nodded.

"Wonders will never cease," philosophically remarked Carlton. "It was a thousand to a pony against it."

"Well," reflected his friend, "I don't think I ever should have done it, if Sweepstake hadn't set the example with Priscilla Jenkinson."

"*What!*" cried Augustus, seizing him excitedly by the arm. "Are you sure of that?"

"He told me so himself."

"Idiot that I was to suppose—" muttered the other, "but it is not too late yet. Where's Mabel?"

"Just where you left her," answered Tremayne. "She was awfully bored by that button maker or whatever he is, until Laura Lynx spirited him away. I say, old fellow."

"Well?"

"Take my advice, and don't put it off another minute."

Carlton made no reply, but strode off at a rapid pace towards the spot where Mrs. Leslie and her daughters were still sitting. One look sufficed to enlighten Mabel as to the object of his coming; and before she could repress the tell-tale blush which overspread her features, she felt herself gently drawn aside, and the words which she had so ardently longed for were softly murmured in her ear.

The afternoon was fast drawing to a close, and many of the guests had already departed when Mrs. Leslie's carriage was announced. The landau of Mrs. Jenkinson had just driven from the door, closely followed by Mr. Sweepstake in his smart phaeton; while in sober jog-trot plodded along the hired brougham occupied by the much-enduring Mrs. Mandeville and Miss Laura Lynx. As our party took leave of Lady Caramel, a glance at Mabel's radiant countenance told the mistress of "The Cedars" that her labour had been lost, and that the long-coveted prey had escaped her; but she was a true woman of the world, bore the disappointment with Spartan impenetrability, and her farewell smile, even when directed towards the principal offenders, was cordiality itself.

One of the most reluctant to quit the festive scene was Mr. Wattles. As he prepared, with much inward trepidation (for he was an indifferent rider), to mount his horse, which had been impatiently pawing the gravel for the last half-hour, the parting words of his hostess sent him back to town in an ecstacy of bliss.

"I hope, Mr. Wattles, that we shall have the pleasure of seeing you in Grosvenor Square."

"Oh! mamma," said Lucy, when they were once more alone, "how could you ask that horrid man to call!"

"My dear Lucy," gravely replied Lady Caramel, "no man is horrid who has ten thousand a year. You forget that you were twenty-nine last birthday. On ne sait pas ce qui peut arriver!"

C. H.

THROUGH HOLLAND.

ABANDONING the neighbourhood of the Dead Cities and everything northward of Amsterdam, I determined one day to pursue my travels southward to Utrecht and thence upwards again into Friesland. Having seen something of one side of the Zuyder Zee, its desolate banks and quaint towns, I wished to gain experience of the other. The ancient city of Utrecht, famous for its bygone records, both warlike and ecclesiastical, its cathedral, its manufactories of velvet, which finds its way into so many drawing-rooms at home and abroad, bore some attractions for A. also. He quickly made up his mind to accompany me so far on my way, and then return to his beloved museums, pencils, and palette, whilst I pursued my solitary road in search of fresh fields and pastures new.

We started in good time one morning, and the distance between the towns was soon accomplished. No journey is very long in Holland. To go from London to Liverpool or Edinburgh is, even in these days, more or less of an undertaking: you feel at least that you have a journey before you. But this is a sensation you can scarcely realise in Holland, wherever rails are laid down. The distances are so comparatively short that you may describe the whole circle comprising the chief cities of the Netherlands, and return to your starting-point comfortably and leisurely, in the broad hours of the day.

The scenery on the road between Amsterdam and Utrecht was so much like the rest of the scenery in Holland that it need not be described. The reader by this time must be familiar with its main points. And yet, in truth, it was a degree more diversified; and towards Utrecht the country became somewhat undulating. This was sufficient variety to create diversion; rare enough to cause wonder, if not alarm.

In visiting Utrecht, or in writing thereupon, it is impossible to forget that here the first Christian church was established. In those early days it was the scene of religious struggles, just as, nearly a thousand years later, Holland was a prey to the Spaniard's lust of power. These recollections surround Utrecht with a halo, the more interesting than the events of the sixteenth century, that they gain all the subtle mystery that envelops a far-gone period of time: that vague feeling with which fourscore years looks back upon the days of its first youth, as a thing that could never, yet must, have been: all the romance and fervour which surround the history of the early martyrs.

In those times (not the very earliest of this dispensation), Utrecht

belonged to Friesland, a distinct province whose brave people, the Frisians, were first cousins to our own ancestors, the Anglo-Saxons. The country of the Netherlands in the early centuries was a prey to many races: the Franks, the Vandals, the Saxons, the Frisians, and others. The Frisians were finally conquered by Charlemagne, and then it was that they endeavoured to Christianize these pagans. Dagobert, son of Clotaire II., advanced against them as far as the Weser, took possession of Utrecht, and founded there the first Christian church. Still there was continual opposition, until Charles Martel, in the eighth century, fought a great battle, and finally caused them to accept Christianity. The Anglo-Saxons from Britain had much to do with their conversion, and the first Bishop of Utrecht, Willibrod, was an Anglo-Saxon. He abolished idolatry and founded the churches of North Holland. Winfrid, or Bonifacius, was another of the early Anglo-Saxon Christians who laboured amongst the Frisians, though more especially in Upper and Lower Germany, and finally endured martyrdom. Charles Martel gave to Willibrod extensive domains about Utrecht, and great wealth; and for many centuries the Bishops of Utrecht and the Counts of Holland held sway over the whole country.

Centuries after, Utrecht had to take her part in the Spanish Invasion, though she was spared many of its immediate horrors. It was here that the Phantom Battle was said to have been seen, of which various records are preserved, and the following is given by Motley:—

"Early in February, five soldiers of the burgher guard at Utrecht, being on their midnight watch, beheld in the sky above them the representation of a furious battle. The sky was extremely dark, except directly over their heads, where, for a space equal in extent to the length of the city, and in breadth to that of an ordinary chamber, two armies, in battle array, were seen advancing on each other. The one moved rapidly up from the north-west, with banners waving, spears flashing, trumpets sounding, accompanied by heavy artillery, and by squadrons of cavalry. The other came slowly forward from the south-east, as if from an entrenched camp, to encounter their assailants. There was a fierce action for a few moments; the shouts of combatants, the heavy discharge of cannon, the rattle of musketry, the tramp of heavy-armed foot soldiers, the rush of cavalry, being distinctly heard. The firmament trembled with the shock of the contending hosts, and was lurid with the rapid discharge of their artillery. After a short, fierce engagement, the north-western army was beaten back in disorder, but rallied again after a breathing time, formed again into solid column, and again advanced. Their foes, arrayed, as the witnesses affirmed, in a square and closely serried grove of spears and muskets, again awaited the attack. Once more the aerial cohorts closed upon each other, all the signs and sounds of a desperate encounter being distinctly recognised by the eager

witnesses. The struggle seemed but short. The lances of the south-eastern army seemed to snap 'like hempstalks,' while their firm columns all went down together in a mass, beneath the onset of their enemies. The overthrow was complete—victors and vanquished had faded, the clear blue space, surrounded by black clouds, was empty, when suddenly its whole extent, where the conflict had so lately raged, was streaked with blood, flowing athwart the sky in broad crimson streams; nor was it till the five witnesses had fully watched and pondered over these portents that the vision entirely vanished."

The depositions of the five witnesses were taken on oath separately before the magistrates, and the vision was considered typical of the impending battle between Count Louis and the Spaniards; which in reality ended in the total defeat and death of the former, or south-eastern army, under circumstances, as usual, of the greatest horror and massacre. Thus confirming the superstitious ideas of the people.

Then, in 1579, came the Treaty of Utrecht and the Union of the States, effected by Prince William of Orange, which was the foundation of the Dutch Republic; wherein all the provinces agreed on a close union for the purposes of safety, whilst each retained its entire and separate freedom, privileges, and laws. Thus we see what an important part Utrecht has played in the history of the Netherlands, and how, for reasons both past and present, it is a town that cannot remain unvisited.

Into this town we bent our steps one fine morning, and I felt at once its influence. You cannot be long in Utrecht without discovering that you are in a new element. It is different from any other town in Holland. In Amsterdam you have all the hurry of commerce; of men jostling each other in order to grow rich; that race for wealth that has become so fierce a battle and so perpetual a motion. Rotterdam is equally commercial, but here the shipping element more loudly declares itself, and throws over its bustle and work a charm very nearly allied to the romantic: the freedom of the broad ocean, the good-natured carelessness of those who go down to her in ships influence her very atmosphere. The Hague possesses fashion and pleasure to its heart's content: vulgar commerce must not run a race beside its dashing equipages and fair occupants. The *tone* of society is here, though much less observable than in Mayfair and the new Boulevards of Paris: that wonderful tone which will not allow its votaries to be natural, and is only to be described by the odious word artificial: assumed as much as the paint and padding which compose those brilliant complexions and Venus-like figures. Leyden, in spite of a past history of absorbing interest, is dull in this its day. You almost feel that its atmosphere has become impregnated with some of the dryness of its University tomes; lifeless and stagnant as the numberless stuffed birds, beasts, and fishes contained in its extensive museum. Haarlem—dear Haarlem—lives

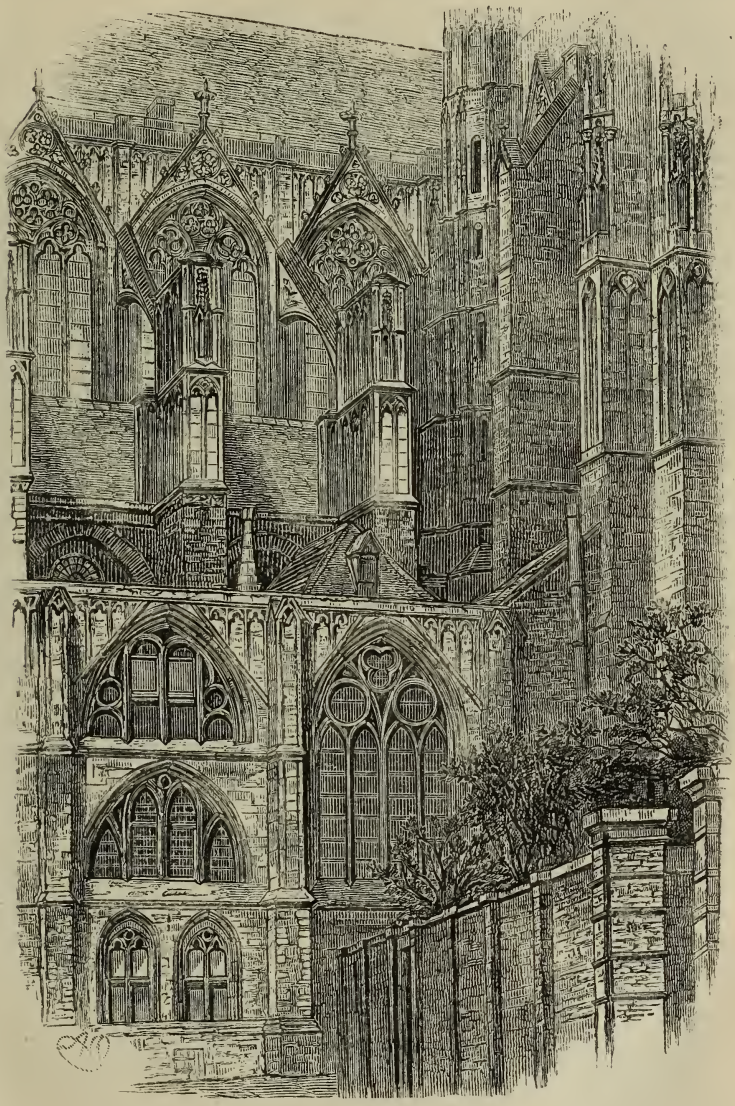
in its past; its town-hall and wonderful old room, its cathedral, and sense-touching organ. You wander about its streets in a dream of bygone days, and there is no unusual noise or confusion rudely to awaken you. Hand in hand you walk with ghostly phantoms, and go through the horrors and excitement of that terrible siege as vividly as if three hundred years had not rolled on since then and passed into the eternal records.

But Utrecht is apart from one and all these characteristics. There is no element of commerce about its streets; royalty throws no refined flavour into the air; it has simply and peculiarly, the calm, grave, sedate dignity of a cathedral town. It knows how to respect itself, and how to make itself by the world respected—though the one fact, you will say, is a natural consequence of the other. Those heavy and alarming cameons, which thunder through Rotterdam and its sister city like heavy pieces of artillery, would set on edge the teeth of Utrecht. There is nothing to annoy you, or to grate upon you. Its streets are quiet, wonderfully clean, well-built; it has groves of trees which are called boulevards, and form pleasant walks in summer. It has a mint where all the money is coined that passes into the pockets and stocking-toes of this thrifty people, and travels even as far as the Dutch East Indian possessions. It has a royal observatory where the sage old astronomers can keep sympathetic watch with the lovers in those shady groves of the Mal: only another proof how closely allied are the sublime and the ridiculous. The Mal, or Maliebaan, is an avenue of lime trees, three rows deep on either side, and more than half a mile in length. Imagine, my dear Virginia, the delicious scent and shade those limes must give forth as you tread the avenues with your beloved Paul, not arm-in-arm, but arms and hands more cunningly disposed. What Romeos and Juliettes have sighed out their vows to the sweet music of these rustling leaves, though with a happier termination, let us hope, than befell those two we all know of.

And it is time, I bethink me, to terminate this theme. I see before me a dignitary of the Church bristling with righteous horror, and asking me how I dare intrude such thoughts upon the sanctity of a cathedral city. Alas and alack, my dear bishop, is not human nature akin in its one touch? You protest? But did you not, perchance, in youthful days of ardour and passion, wander with some sweet Eve amidst these groves, your arm encircling her bewitching waist, and murmuring soft follies into her ear? Have you had no experience of "moonlight rovings in the fragrant glades"? Quick, there! a leech to reduce the purple in my lord bishop's countenance. We have struck a right chord; its vibrations loudly betray themselves. Let us pass on to the University, which is an important one and numbers about five hundred students, many of them of the upper classes of Dutch society.

All this I felt and saw as we wandered through the quiet streets.

We had been recommended to the Hotel des Pays Bas, and found it everything that could be desired for comfort, quiet, cleanliness,



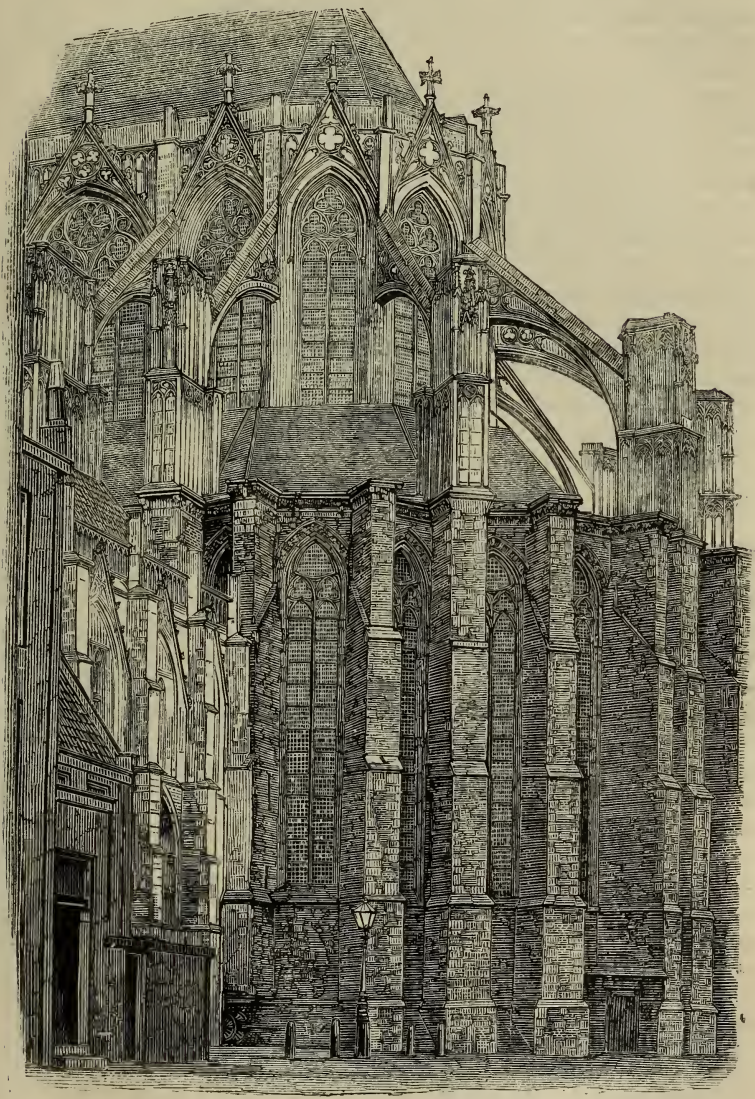
CATHEDRAL, UTRECHT.

and the polite attentions of its host. When I had satisfactorily settled my room and obtained foothold in the place, our wanderings commenced. They were taken in company with a guide; an

immensely tall, cadaverous, bilious-looking individual, who was quite paternal in his manners, and drew out for the benefit of his fellow townsmen all sorts of impossible fees upon every possible occasion. Beware of these guides, ye who visit Holland; or, at least, do not accuse me of neglecting to warn you. Be as generous as you please; you cannot be too much so, as a rule, through life; but our whole being rises against extortion and imposture. To-day we could not do without a guide; we had not time to find out things for ourselves; A. had but a few hours to devote to the old town; he was to return that evening to his paints and palettes — not paints and powders. We first of all bent our steps towards the Cathedral. Truly it is a thing of beauty. In the days of its perfect state it must have been a marvel. What remains of it far eclipses every other church in Holland. Nothing can approach it, or be compared with it. The adjoining cloisters, separating the church from the university, are worthy of their destiny. The Cathedral was formerly a large Gothic edifice, built in the thirteenth century, occupying the site of the original church founded by Willibrod, first Bishop of Utrecht, about the year 720. Thus for nearly 1200 years the spot has been consecrated to religion. On the 1st of August, 1674, the nave of the church fell in, during a terrific storm. Henceforth the remainder of the church was separated from the fine old tower, which still stands, a land beacon, to be seen from all points of the surrounding country. To ensconce yourself in a corner of the cloisters and gaze through the broken arches at the beautiful monument beyond them; with its flying buttresses and pointed windows; its decorative stonework and delicate tracery standing out here and there in its age like some exquisite lace work of the olden time; was to withdraw from this world into one long past, and fall insensibly into a delicious dream of architectural beauty and bygone realities from which you would not care quickly to awaken. I am anxious to give a few extra words to this structure; to impress it upon the reader; for it was one of the very few that delighted me in Holland; the only one I left with regret; with last long lingering looks; with a wish to return to it over and over again; the only one that excited my imagination and love of the beautiful to the highest degree, and summoned up those feelings that can never be absent when you stand before these monuments of genius and high art, whose perfections and charms are increased a hundredfold by the at once kind and cruel hand of Time.

After a long gaze at this beautiful structure, taking it from all points of the cloisters, as well as from the outside, we discovered that we had half an hour to spare before an organ rehearsal was to be given in the cathedral. We crossed over to the fine old tower; and nothing would satisfy A. but the gratification of an insane wish to ascend it. Its height is 321 feet by 70 square at the base. A grand, grey monument, hoary with age. The ascent was fatiguing

to the last degree from the shallowness of the steps and their immense number. A short distance upwards and we reached the



CATHEDRAL, UTRECHT.

first stage. It had been fitted up into rooms, and a counter bristled with bottles and glasses, Schiedam and beer. A syren came forward and pressed upon us her wares. Where next would they establish

their trades? The crafty old guide sat himself down in a chair, and invited us to a like siesta. Then, as we did not hasten to offer him of the juice of the grape or the juniper, he called for a bottle holding about a quart of beer, drank it off quickly, and condescendingly allowed us to settle up matters with this ecclesiastical vivandière.

We reached the summit at last. The view is extensive, and perhaps worth the ten minutes' treadmill of which it is the reward. On a clear day the whole of Holland lies stretched before you, and something beyond. With a telescope you may discern Rotterdam, Amsterdam, the Zuyder Zee, and many other places; besides part of Guelderland and North Brabant. Imagine ascending a tower that disclosed the whole of England at one view. How much this says for the flatness of the country. We gained an excellent idea of the town, its streets, and numerous churches. Immediately below us was the square, the cathedral, beautiful from any point of view, and the cloisters. Above us, crowning the tower, a figure of St. Martin on horseback served as a weathercock—the Saint having given his name to the church. Immediately below us were the chimes, consisting of 42 bells, and they treated us to a benefit. Out clashed a peal that might have done service at the wild orgies of Pandemonium, and then the hour boomed forth. The old tower trembled and vibrated beneath the strokes.

We bestowed some time upon this remarkable view, which shows forth the town with its walks and ramparts, the surrounding and far-off fields and dykes, trees, and towns, canals and seas, inland and beyond land, and returned to earth. On his way down the guide seemed inclined to call for another bottle of beer, but without ceremony we took the lead and continued our circuitous journey; a sufficiently intoxicating proceeding, without any outward help. We entered the cathedral as the organ was playing, and for half an hour found ourselves in "sweetest strains o'erwhelmed." The organist played well, and his selection was excellent. But the interior of the church is as disappointing as the exterior is grand and beautiful. It is cut up into sections, and disfigured by the most frightful woodwork and gallery which runs round the centre like a huge screen, and makes a small area still smaller. Instead of making the most of what remained of the cathedral, it has been ruined by bad taste and judgment. Even the exterior is not to escape. This year, we were told, the whole will be renovated, or it would crumble to ruin. Then farewell to its beauty; to all the feelings of awe and admiration which take possession of you as you gaze upon this remnant of a once glorious church.

When the music was over we left, and piloted by the guide, who had dozed serenely during the performance under the combined influences of melody and beer, we went through the town, and into that part where the shops showed something of life and business:

something of the "spirit of the age," with their great plate-glass windows and French and Viennese wares. Here the Utrecht velvet displayed itself in gorgeous perfection, as coverings for chairs and sofas, worked-in with brilliant pieces of tapestry produced at the loom by hands that certainly could have lost none of their cunning. But the manufactories of Utrecht conceal themselves artfully. Those who want to see them must search. They do not proclaim aloud their existence at the corners of the streets. Utrecht bears no signs of a manufacturing town; no tall, smoky chimneys betray themselves, or I did not see them; the air is not impregnated with a thick vapour like that which renders the Black districts of England more terrible than a Dante's Inferno. Lastly, we entered the ecclesiastical museum; a collection of Roman Catholic pictures, signs, symbols, and relics; gorgeous vestments, elaborately chased gold and silver plate, and jewelled cups and chalices. The collection is worth a visit. I have never seen one precisely of this kind elsewhere. But many of the inhabitants of Utrecht are Roman Catholic, with their representative cathedral and archbishop, wealth, relics, and collections have had ages in which to increase and multiply.

I wanted a quill pen. In my solitary room at night, when A. should have returned to Amsterdam; to his beloved palette, which attracted him from all other objects like an unseen magnet; I felt that I could beguile the sleepless hours by fulfilling rashly-made promises and writting letters to distant friends. Under the influence of this dignified old town, almost within the very shadow of the cathedral, they would breathe forth an atmosphere that would unconsciously affect the privileged recipients as much as a page out of Butler's Analogy, or a chapter from Paley's Evidences. We searched the town, but in vain. Shop after shop was stormed, with the same result. A quill pen was not to be found. Either they had exhausted their stock, or quills in Utrecht are unknown. It is just possible that the Dutch geese, like the Shakers, are peculiar birds; a sect unto themselves; and do not grow quills upon their wings. This is a problem that ornithologists would do well to look into. Be the fact as it may, it remains that I had to go without my quill; and that night scratched away upon thin paper with a hard steel pen, that of a surety diminished the solemn aroma with which I had intended to point my sentences.

This wild-goose chase after a quill took up the remaining portion of the afternoon, and we returned to the hotel just in time for the table d'hôte. It was very quiet, and considering that we were not above ten people at table, very good. The landlord himself looked after the waiters and superintended the dishes; a rule that landlords would do well to adopt more frequently.

Dinner over, so also was A.'s sojourn in Utrecht. We wandered forth leisurely towards the station. Every here and there—vistas down a street, houses overlooking a canal; a quaint corner; a long

stretch of water with its deepening reflections—we came upon a picturesque bit sufficient to have tempted an artist to a lengthened stay in the old place. Utrecht is higher above the level of its canals than any other town in Holland; and this alone gives to it, as you walk about and observe the fact, a pleasant sense of elevation, a seeming depth to its banks and its water that you get nowhere else. Twilight, almost darkness, was gathering rapidly as we went. The town put on its night aspect. Gas in the shop windows of the long street leading to the station made its appearance. Lights streamed from many upper windows. The scene was warm and cheerful if not animated. A. had a fancy for a glass of curaçoa before starting, and turned into a respectable-looking wine place with his request. The matron behind the counter, with offended dignity, informed him that she did not serve out glasses: nothing less than a bottle. Her cap-ribbons bristled with rage at so much insult, like the tail of a cat on the defensive. A. found himself non-plussed. I could not trust him on his journey with a whole bottle of curaçoa as sole companion. In vain he protested. I was severe as an oracle, and much more intelligible. So we went on minus the curaçoa, and reached the station. He was off at last; though with all my instructions about keeping awake, and not getting out at a wrong station, or changing trains when he ought to remain quiet, I did not feel at all sure that I should ever see him again.

I wended my way back, strolled about the town for a short time, and returned to the hotel. They had given me a cozy, comfortable room, one of the best the house afforded. As I sat steel—not quill—driving, at due intervals the chimes crashed out their protest against the rapid flight of time, and the great bell marked the hours in a dull sonorous voice, particularly agreeable to one's feelings and inspiring to one's thoughts. At length, as all household sounds ceased, and my sentences grew longer and more involved—to the distraction of those to whom they were addressed—and the candles shortened in inverse ratio to the sentences, I feared I might be left in total darkness and at the mercy of the spirits of evil. So, wisely, I turned in, and sought my pillow, and quickly found rest and oblivion from all things mundane.

That pillow is often a good friend to many of us; to some the best friend they possess in this world. There they lose the ills they have without flying to others they know not of. Pains of mind and body fall off and are remembered no more: until a cruel awakening, when a certain vague sense of oppression haunts them in the first moments of half-returned consciousness with a terror worse than any inspired by a vampire or a judge in the fatal black cap. Happily for me I had a quiet conscience and a sound body, and was at peace with all the world. I remember in my dreams that night I was building a cathedral that should utterly eclipse all the beauties of Cologne and Notre Dame, Amiens and Westminster. Utrecht was

to form its site. Its pavement was to be of gold, and its pillars of crystal. Each window was to be composed of a single precious stone; and the darkness of night was to be illumined by a stream of self-supplying light issuing from an enormous diamond suspended from the centre of the high vaulted roof. Years went on. The structure was raised in all its beauty. The whole world flocked to gaze at the wonder. I had become a grey-haired ecclesiastic, centuries old, and was preaching to a crowd of eager listeners from a pulpit of marbles taken from the temple of Solomon, whose buried existence had been revealed by inspiration. I was denouncing my hearers if they turned not from their evil ways; the eternal judgments were ripe for the sickle; the vials of wrath were poured out; even now could they not hear the avenging angels knocking at the closed portals for admission —when I awoke with an unmistakable knocking at my own door, and a Dutch voice proclaiming eight bells. In a moment my glorious structure, grey hairs, listening flock, world-fame vanished, and like the baseless fabric of the vision it was, left not a wreck behind.

Cloisters, Utrecht.

Breakfast over, and dispensing with the irrepressible guide, I strolled out to pay a visit to the exhibition then being held in Utrecht. It was not on a very large scale, but contained many excellent objects. Old-fashioned articles of furniture; delightfully carved chairs and tables; new-fashioned pianos, and organs with remarkable combinations of the celestial voice and double bass; pictures that must not be too severely criticised, agricultural implements of all descriptions, and exquisite and impossible lace at a hundred guineas a yard, that many a fair dame would have gone through fire and water to possess. It was the last day of the show, and there was a sleepiness and

inaction about the guardians of these treasures that seemed to say they had had quite enough of Utrecht and its people.

Passing out I turned into a tempting old curiosity shop. There I found a wonderful specimen of engraved ruby glass, a perfect work of art from the depth and beauty of the workmanship. I carried it away in triumph, and took as much care of it in going through Holland as a nurse would give to her young charge. It travelled with me into Friesland, Guelderland, and I know not where. But on the very last stage of my journey, just when I thought all danger was over, as fate would have it, it was broken into twenty fragments. In that shop the man showed me as a great favour—a favour, he declared, seldom bestowed upon anyone — three pieces of old Worcester china, certainly rare enough. He did not care to sell them; would rather not; but if I was excessively taken with them, he would, to do me a pleasure, part with them for a hundred pounds. He was permitted to keep them.

My next destination was to be Zwolle, the capital of Over-Yssel; a province seldom visited by travellers. I desired to see the curious old place, and the still more curious old town of Kampen. I was also anxious to discover whether any traces remained of the monastery inhabited for so many years by Thomas à Kempis; and I wished to visit the tomb of the saint, and gaze upon the spot where his bones rested. For according to many authorities here he lies buried; a statement which cannot be too speedily corrected, for neither his bones nor his ashes rest here. Zwolle lay on my road to Friesland, and therefore was in all ways convenient to my plans. So before twelve o'clock that day I had bid adieu to my attentive host, turned my back upon Utrecht, its beautiful old church and cloisters, its shady groves, and calm dignity, and with many a wish to revisit it at some future period, turned my face northwards.

CHARLES W. WOOD.

CROSS PURPOSES.

By the Author of "Polly."

IT is far on in the month of April, and the wooded hills surrounding Ussher Court are glowing with purple and olive tints in the spring sunshine. The trees are always late here in budding forth into tender greens, being nipped and chilled by the sea breezes and storms.

That comfortable and sociable meal, breakfast, has just been partaken of in the oak-panelled morning-room of the great house, but the different members of the family residing at the Court have not yet dispersed. Sir John and Lady Ussher, with their two daughters, are still lingering at the table. A boy of about fourteen rises, very unwillingly, to follow his tutor, who stands awaiting him at the chamber door. The tutor, Mr. Stuart, is tall, and powerfully built, though well proportioned. He has laughing blue eyes, and a long silky brown beard, which he loves to stroke occasionally.

During the year which has passed since William Stuart left the University, his chief difficulty has been that of trying to keep before his mind the fact that he occupies a subordinate position in life. It comes so naturally to him to hold his head aloft, and to speak in steady confident tones, that he is, even now, ever and anon forgetting himself, taking the lead in conversation, and behaving altogether more as if he were a son rather than a tutor in the house. He has but one pupil, the youth before mentioned, whose name is Robert, but this is generally shortened into Bob. At a renewed summons from his preceptor, he now follows the latter. The two have hardly left the room when Isabel Ussher, a handsome, haughty-looking girl, turns to her father, saying:

"And is it quite certain, papa, that you will not take a house in London this season, even for one month?"

"My dear, I am sure that question was definitely settled before. We ought, as I told you, to be retrenching our expenditure, in place of increasing it. Why do you torment me in this way, when you know that I hate talking about such things?" And Sir John got up from his seat at the head of the table. He was a silent studious man, and rather disliked entering into a discussion upon any subject whatever. His daughter sulked and pouted.

"I think it is very provoking," she said. "I can't bear going about with Aunt Chenevix. Mamma would be so much pleasanter as a chaperon."

"Then do not go to London at all this year," suggested her elder sister, Evasia. The latter was a slight pale woman, past her first youth,

but looking older than she really was. Her manner was subdued, and her eyes drooped often with an expression of weariness. They were such sad eyes that you were tempted to think she must have wept out all the fire and brilliancy they had ever possessed. Her sight was weak, and she continually wore spectacles when engaged at anything to which she needed to pay close attention. She put them on now, as she drew a piece of fancy work out of her pocket while she spoke to Isabel.

The beauty tossed her graceful head angrily, but this was the only attention she paid to the advice offered. She did not even take the trouble of saying she would decline to follow it; and Evasia began to employ her hands, seemingly in no way surprised. She was a fragile, delicate-looking girl, but she, nevertheless, enjoyed excellent health, as did also her sister.

Neither of Sir John and Lady Ussher's two sons was, however, constitutionally strong, although the younger, our acquaintance Bob, was a tall well-grown lad, endowed with plenty of muscular power, and with a very wholesome horror of everything in the shape of study, or of useful instruction.

"I suppose Browne costs you a full hundred a year, papa," Isabel said, turning again to her father, "and he is hardly ever of any use to us, only to Philip." Sir John nodded a silent assent to her remarks.

"If Philip would only marry some one with money, he could pay his man's expenses himself then, out of his wife's pocket," she continued peevishly. "Mamma, why don't you invite some rich girl here now; at once; before Phil returns from Ireland?"

Lady Ussher glanced nervously towards her elder daughter as she answered, "I have been considering different things; and I intend to write and ask poor Walter Lee's widow to come and spend May and June with us. She is young and good-looking; and she had a large fortune of her own. And then, you know, Walter came in for a good property, unexpectedly, shortly after he married, and everything has been left to his wife to do just as she would with."

Evasia bent her head down over her work. Her father looked at her, and then out of the window, and began to whistle softly.

"Anabel Lee is well enough," observed Isabel. "But if you invite her here you must also ask her companion, Lucy Campbell—a stupid insignificant little girl."

"Philip is to bring Colonel Foster back with him from Ireland, to spend his leave with us," Lady Ussher returned. "You must stay at home and help to entertain all these people, Isabel."

Mrs. Lee accepted the invitation given to her, and a day early in May was fixed on for her arrival. It was not yet quite two years since her husband's death; but, although she shrank from the thought of taking part in London gaieties, she was pleased to visit Ussher

Court, Walter Lee having been distantly related to its inhabitants. When the important morning came, even the unobservant tutor perceived that there was an unusual stir and agitation in the house. He began to think that the coming visitor, whom he heard talked of, must be some very imposing and important personage.

"I wonder what sort of a lady this is who is to arrive here this afternoon?" he said to his pupil, as they waited in the drawing-room for Sir John to appear and read family prayers.

"There are two ladies asked, and I'm sure we don't want either of them," Bob answered, absently. He was busily considering how he could induce his mother to allow him to go out some evening shortly for a night's sea-fishing, with a young man in the neighbourhood whose society he was very fond of. He made his request at the breakfast-table as boldly as he could, but hardly with a hopeful mind or tone.

"What hour could you return home?" Lady Ussher inquired. "You know I will not have you out late."

The boy's face fell. "Tanner would bring me in at twelve, I suppose, if I asked him."

"You must give up all idea of going," his mother remarked, decisively. "I will not even hear of your being upon the water at such a time of the night, with your delicate chest."

"Tanner would take Mr. Stuart, too, if you wished," the lad said in an entreating voice; but Lady Ussher remained firm in her refusal to give the desired permission, although she seldom denied her youngest and favourite child anything which he had set his heart upon. Bob moped all the forenoon, and did but little at his books. He only shrugged his shoulders discontentedly when his tutor attempted to console him by remarking that he might have some fun after the arrival of the visitors, and when his brother, Mr. Ussher, had returned home. "He comes to-morrow, you know," added William Stuart.

"He is a great swell; he isn't up to any game," grumbled the boy, who seldom opened his mouth without giving utterance to some slang expression.

As a sort of compensation for his disappointment, Lady Ussher sent him and his preceptor into town in the carriage to meet the guests at the railway station; and, in spite of his vaunted nonchalance concerning the arrivals, Bob's spirits rose perceptibly at the prospect of getting a first glimpse at the young widow, of whom he shrewdly saw that a great deal was to be made. He was very quiet and gentlemanly in his behaviour until the ladies had taken their seats in the barouche. He should have stepped in next, but, in place of doing so, he gave a sudden shout, something like the war whoop of a red Indian. "Oh, I say, there's Tanner!" he exclaimed. "I must go and speak to him."

Mr. Stuart caught him by the arm; but the boy shook off the

detaining grasp and escaped, running round the corner of the next street with all possible speed. The idle folk who were loitering about the terminus gazed after him in surprise, while one of the strangers in the carriage began to laugh, lifting her veil as she did so, in order to catch a final glimpse of the truant. The perplexed tutor sent a footman in pursuit of his pupil, and then turned to apologise to the ladies for the necessary delay. He had hitherto hardly observed their appearance, and he now bestowed but a very cursory glance upon one of them, a fair-haired retiring girl, for his gaze was at once attracted and riveted by a pair of dark eyes gleaming with amusement, chiefly caused at this moment by the comical look of dismay and provocation which his features wore.

"Your brother seems to be a great madcap," the owner of the eyes said. A wild and foolish longing that he were, indeed, Sir John Ussher's eldest son and heir, shot for an instant into William Stuart's heart, bringing a shade of pallor to his cheek; and his answer was hurried.

"My name is Stuart. I am this hero's afflicted tutor—not his brother."

The lady's face changed somewhat. An expression of disappointment flitted across it. She was a quick-witted woman, and had gathered even from Lady Ussher's first letter of invitation that she was asked to Ussher Court with a purpose, and had guessed what that purpose was. She felt rather provoked now at finding that this handsome, gentlemanly, and prepossessing young man was not, as she had supposed, Philip Ussher.

In the opinion of some persons, Anabel Lee, apart from her wealth and position, was a woman of merely ordinary attractions. She was small and plump, and not particularly graceful in her movements. Her face was not beautiful, but then her eyes were. Looking into them was like gazing into a well of cool refreshing water on a sultry summer's day. They were soft and limpid, and ever changeful in their depth of colouring. You could see into her soul through these windows, and no page that was not pure and honest was ever read therein by any curious beholder.

When Bob reappeared, he subsided sheepishly into his corner of the carriage, muttering a number of excuses for his behaviour. "Tanner had been telling him something, and afterwards he was obliged to buy some cord that he required; but for this he should have returned sooner." He relapsed into silence then, and remained solemnly unobtrusive for some time, until Anabel said she supposed he was a great sportsman, upon which he brightened up, and ejaculated, "Rather," in an impressive tone of voice. She responded to this by the use of some new and fashionable slang term, although she hastened to condemn the use of what she called "a vulgar style of language." Bob was deeply interested in these matters, however, and when he had discovered that she could put him up to many

expressions hitherto quite unknown to him he proved an apt pupil.

"Mrs. Lee is a brick," Bob remarked confidently to his sister that evening; but Eva had been far more won by the gentle companion than by her patroness. She at once took Lucy into her heart, forming for her one of those sudden friendships which, in some cases, prove lasting. Her eyes strayed over, again and again at dinner, to the shy and blushing girl, whose face she thought was the fairest she had ever seen. The evening sunlight was streaming in upon her small graceful head, and turning her hair into a halo of adornment. Bob had gallantly offered his arm to lead her into the dining-room; but, as he sat between her and Mrs. Lee, his whole attention was given to the latter, and he never even glanced towards his legitimate dinner partner. The young tutor sat next Miss Ussher: and he, too, looked across the table. His companion believed that his eyes went in the same direction as hers, and at last, towards the end of dinner, she said softly to him, "Don't you think she is very beautiful?"

"I never saw anyone half so beautiful before," he observed, as he drew a long breath which was something akin to a sigh. Eva smiled, and a small romance arranged itself before her mind.

"Her eyes are like the blue sky on a sunshiny day. I hope only that she may have plenty of bright summer weather in her life to keep them serene," she murmured half to herself; and then she saw the young man's blank look of surprise.

"Oh, you mean Miss Campbell, I suppose," he exclaimed, with a sudden glance of comprehension. "I don't think I care much about her face. She reminds me of one of those sea flowers that shrink away if you only touch them with your finger."

This description of Lucy Campbell's characteristics was not unapt. She was a girl born, it would seem, to be crushed and kept down, for she never, in any case, asserted her rights, or exacted deference from others. All attention paid to her she received with unassuming gratitude, and repaid generally with warm devotion to the giver. Hitherto she had seen but little of life, having only within the last couple of years left the seclusion of her Scottish home, which she had exchanged for that of Mrs. Lee.

It was late next evening before the heir of the house returned home with his friend. When the bustle of the arrival had subsided, Colonel Foster made his appearance in the drawing-room.

To Lady Ussher's evident vexation, her son did not come downstairs. "I wonder what can be delaying Philip?" she said at last. "He has been so very anxious to make your acquaintance," she continued, turning to Anabel; who sat on a low couch at her side, busy with some fancy work.

"We had a terribly rough passage, and I fear he is a good deal

knocked up, poor fellow," Colonel Foster observed. But this remark was, plainly, not welcome to Lady Ussher: who rose and left the room. In the hall she met her son's valet, an enormous man, considerably over six feet in height. He stood aside to let her pass, but she paused to speak.

"I want to know, Browne, why Mr. Ussher has not joined us? He appeared to be perfectly well when he arrived?"

"According to my judgment, my lady, my master is fit for nothing but his bed to-night, and he is of the same opinion himself," the man answered, respectfully.

"Oh, nonsense!" was the angry rejoinder of his mistress. "He must come down this evening, if only for a few minutes. Now that we have visitors staying in the house it would be exceedingly awkward for him not to appear."

"Well, my lady," the servant said, dubiously, "if you send Colonel Foster out to me, I will do what I can: but ——"

Lady Ussher waited to hear no more. She returned to the drawing-room, and told her guest, with many apologies, that her son wanted him for a moment. Colonel Foster hurried away, and presently reappeared, bringing with him a slight youthful-looking man of about six or seven and twenty years of age, who leaned upon his companion's arm. This was Philip Ussher; and Anabel looked up, at his entrance, with a glance of interest, which was not unobserved by the mistress of the house. His face was wan and pale, and there were dark lines drawn under his eyelids, telling of suffering to a close observer, but his eyes shone and sparkled with feverish brilliancy. They were grey in colour, handsome, and adorned with long dark lashes, such as a woman might have envied. He seemed to take in the whole room and its occupants during the quick comprehensive look he cast around, as he stood upon the threshold. His sister and Lucy Campbell sat near a table, and, when the necessary introductions had been made, he obeyed a gesture made by his mother, and took possession of an easy chair near Anabel, with whom he entered into conversation. Bob, close at hand, tried hard to engross at least a share of the young widow's attention.

"I fear that Philip is feeling very much done up to-night," Eva observed, anxiously, in a low voice to her companion. "He is so wonderfully sober and quiet."

Lucy gave a shy surprised glance over at the grave face of the subject under discussion. There was even a certain amount of severity, now, about the lines of his mouth. "Is he generally very gay and merry, then?" she whispered, in wondering tones. "I should have thought he would be always as solemn as a—judge."

"Appearances are deceitful you see," Eva said. "On the contrary, he is such a dear quicksilver fellow that I am sure you will not like him at all. You are so sober yourself," and she laid her hands caressingly, for an instant, on her new friend's slender white fingers,

which held a large book of engravings open. Lucy gave a pleased grateful little smile; and now, with her sensitive face glowing, again looked across the room. She dropped her eyes upon the picture before her, however, for she found that both Lady Ussher and her son were gazing at her, although with an expression each of very different meaning. One glance spoke of admiration, of tender, respectful homage; the other showed dislike and distrust. Philip saw that a painful blush rose even to the young girl's temples; he turned away and resumed his conversation with Mrs. Lee. Each endeavoured to appear deeply interested in what the other had to say. Anabel was speaking and Philip was, apparently, listening attentively, when he put his hand to his breast, with an involuntary exclamation of pain.

"I beg your pardon," he said, pronouncing every syllable with that slow distinct utterance, which betrays that each word is articulated with suffering, and by a strong mental effort of will on the part of the speaker, "but I—Foster, will you ring the bell for my man, and tell him to get me some brandy—or—something." He made a resolute effort to stand up, feeling about for some support, as if he were blind, but fell back helplessly into his chair, in a half swoon. From this he recovered in a few moments, hastily wished them all good night, and went up to his own room.

"It is no wonder that one should suffer from the effects of that dreadful Channel passage," Lady Ussher observed, breaking the dismayed silence which had fallen upon all present. "There are but very few who escape being quite done up by it. I have always said that I thought Irish tours were a mistake, and I am now more than ever persuaded that I am right. With my consent Philip shall never visit Ireland again."

The whole family had assembled in the drawing-room next morning, with the exception of Sir John, before the invalid of the previous evening made his appearance. He paused for an instant at the door, irresolutely, and a momentary flush of embarrassment rose to his cheek, but he recovered himself immediately, assuming an air of extra composure and sprightliness. His face was no longer wan and distressed; but the blue veins, showing on his white forehead and in his transparent hands, told of delicate health. Making a comically reverential bow to all present, he informed his sister that she ought to introduce him over again to her friends. "I made their acquaintance and claimed their compassionate interest upon false pretences as an invalid, last night," he said. "Richard is himself again now."

"You certainly do look quite a new man, after your twelve hours' rest," Eva remarked.

"I hope it is a case of 'pulchrior resurgo,'" he exclaimed, looking up from under his long eyelashes with a glance which, in a woman, would have been called shy and appealing.

"I always heard it was very rude to talk in dead languages before ladies," Bob remarked, with an air of important solemnity, very much put out at the interruption his brother's entrance had effected between himself, his tutor, and Anabel. Her attention was now drawn away. She was observing Philip keenly.

"Don't you mean that you think it unkind to quote Latin before little boys who ought to understand what is said, but—who do not?" suggested Philip.

"I am no little boy," cried Bob, swelling with indignation, at being thus addressed before Mrs. Lee. "I am very nearly as tall as you are, Philip, and I am just twice as strong. *I* don't need to have to go off to bed after a sea voyage."

"Hold your tongue, you sir," whispered Mr. Stuart into his pupil's ear, while Colonel Foster quietly turned to him. "My dear boy, when a soldier has been wounded it is never considered any disgrace for him to leave the battle-field."

"A man can't be wounded when he doesn't fight," retorted the lad.

"He did fight, however, with the elements, yesterday: and they are tough enemies enough. Some one has said that the only good thing in Ireland is the west wind, to blow you out of it. I wish we had been favoured with that boon."

Philip laughed, and shuddered, as he echoed this wish. "My mother always tells me that Ireland is a mistake," he said. "I almost begin to agree with her. Certainly we Saxons have had bad sport there, this year. If only some Cassandra had quoted, beforehand, to us Dante's 'Lasciate ogni speranza voi ch'entrate,' we might have all remained at home perhaps. I have not offended now, Bob. I quoted Italian, and all ladies are supposed to understand that. Are they not?" he asked, turning to Lucy Campbell, near whom he stood.

"I know it, but then my mother was an Italian," she answered, softly, a bright blush lighting her face. Philip fell into a reverie, which Bob soon interrupted by inquiring, with vivacity, as to what the bad sport was to which reference had been made, and who had it.

"We had," laughed Philip; "and the X eleven were beaten, again and again, down in the South. Foster and I pitied their wounded feelings so much that we invited them to spend a day with us, but the plucky fellows told us plainly that their sorrows were beyond our reach. Fact is, they were going for a drinking bout at Killarney."

"But your own sport?" urged Bob, while his mother reproved her elder son for telling improper stories.

"Our own sport!" Philip answered, with an air of deep consideration and solemnity, giving a mischievous glance over at the Colonel, who answered it by pushing a chair to his friend. "Oh, that consisted principally of a cat and three rabbits. They came rather expensive too: something like seven-and-sixpence a head."

"But of course you had plenty of fishing, and I suppose you caught some fine salmon," Bob said, while the rest were laughing.

His brother shook his head. "We caught no salmon," he replied, "and we did not often throw our lines at all. Browne doesn't approve of fishing; and he is strong enough, mentally and bodily, to see that all his vetoes are attended to."

The young widow turned away in contempt. "Overridden by a servant," was her mental scornful observation upon this speech, as she resumed her conversation with the tutor. They had fallen into a discussion upon horsemanship, a subject deeply interesting to both of them.

Lucy Campbell had seen and interpreted, with a little thrill of pain, the expression of repulsion which had momentarily flashed into her friend's face. "Is that very tall man your servant Browne?" she asked softly, blushing and trembling at her own presumption.

"My man is a sort of giant; you could hardly mistake him for anyone else," answered Mr. Ussher, sitting down at her side. "He has strength which is quite extraordinary. I have seen him take a sailor up, by the belt, in his teeth, and give him a good shake, as a sort of joke."

Mrs. Lee, at this moment, turned a beaming face upon Philip, and asked him if he was fond of riding. Her manner was pleased and excited, for she was picturing to herself what delightful parties they might all make up. "As your name is Philip, you ought to love horses, you know," she said, softly and graciously.

The young man hesitated. "I used to be a devoted equestrian,' he said, "but I don't ride much now. I find it somewhat fatiguing, and the inevitable, tyrannical Browne ——"

Mrs. Lee began to tap the floor lightly with her foot, in her impatience and vexation: but at this moment Philip's valet came to him with a message from Sir John, who begged of his son to act as family chaplain that morning.

"What a volatile, irreverent leader we shall have!" Anabel thought. But she found she had, so far, misjudged him. His devout and serious manner, and his glowing upturned face, as he repeated, by heart, a short portion of the daily service out of the prayer-book, should have made her think better of him. With an ingenuity common to mankind, however, she only found a fresh occasion of offence in this new phase of his character, exhibited before her. "Weak, mentally and bodily, and changeable as the winds," she was inwardly murmuring, as she took her seat beside him at the breakfast table.

"You and Colonel Foster appear to be very much devoted to each other," she remarked to Philip.

"We are great friends," he answered, glancing across the table, with a grateful look at the somewhat heavy-featured officer who sat opposite. He is such a dear good fellow, so much more clever also

than he looks. Then he is so strong; and physical as well as mental strength is always admirable."

"I admire strength above everything," Anabel said, impulsively, and she too looked towards the other side of the room, although not in the direction of Colonel Foster. "All women do, I believe; but I cannot understand why you, who are a man, should care about strength in another man—unless ——." Here she paused, and an involuntary gleam of compassion shone out of her beautiful eyes, as she turned them upon him.

"Unless it is that I am so weak, you mean," he answered, bringing out the word with an evident effort.

"Oh! I beg your pardon," she cried, with a thrill of compunction at having wounded him. But he laughed reassuringly, and reminded her that there were different kinds of strength, being wholly unaware that she judged him wanting in all sorts.

The pleasant summer days were passed in drives, visitings, luncheon entertainments, and picnic parties. The evenings were enlivened by much conversation, and by a good deal of instrumental music, of which both Lucy and Philip were passionately fond. Anabel, on the contrary, had no taste whatever in this way, and she often secretly chafed at being obliged, out of politeness, to appear to listen and admire, when she would have much preferred a merry discussion with her two friends, Bob and his preceptor. She enjoyed hearing the two musicians sing duets together, as they sometimes did; but these occasions were rare, for Lady Ussher threw all possible obstacles in the way of such a union of voices.

"As for those pieces you call songs without words, my dear, in which you delight, I can see no beauty in them: I call them sounds without song," the young widow said, one night, to her companion, as the two conversed alone together, according to their custom, before retiring to rest in their separate apartments. Lucy only shook her head over this speech. She did not contest the matter. It took a great deal to rouse her into an attitude of antagonism or defiance.

Bob pleaded hard for a holiday one Monday morning, and his mother allowed him to have his wish. But the weather proved provokingly unpropitious for the out-of-door amusements in which he delighted, and he wandered about disconsolately for a great part of the forenoon, gazing in turn from one window after another, in the vain hope of seeing some lightening in the cloud of driving mist which obscured the landscape. He settled down, at last, in a corner of the drawing-room, with a book, which he assured his tutor was much better worth perusal than the political pamphlet the latter held in his hand.

"'Masterman Ready' suits your taste, but I would sooner be an M.P. than a sailor," observed Mr. Stuart.

It wanted still an hour, or more, of the time when the luncheon

bell would ring, and every one seemed to be somewhat depressed by the gloomy aspect of the day. Anabel, Eva, and Lucy sat working together, at a small table placed in a large bow window. Philip was endeavouring to raise his own spirits, and those of other people, by making a series of jokes, some of which he illustrated with pen-and-ink sketches. Even this was getting wearisome, however; and Colonel Foster groaned audibly over the latest witticism, which he said had disturbed his study of the *Times* by its abominable flatness.

Anabel folded up her work, preparatory to going upstairs to write letters for the day's post, while the officer said grumblingly that, at the present rate of going on, it would certainly be about two hundred years before he became a general. The idea of waiting for promotion all this time struck the young widow as so very ludicrous that she burst into merry laughter. She was still laughing as she left the room, and Eva looked after her with an expression of wistful surprise, and murmured, half to herself, the words, "I cannot understand how she can be so happy."

"She is so good and kind that I think she ought to enjoy life," Lucy said, eager to ward off even the shadow of reproach from her friend. "And her laugh is so bright and sweet that I delight in hearing it."

"Nevertheless its frequency might puzzle you, as it does me, if you had known her husband—if you could comprehend what she has lost in losing him," replied Eva, with a visible effort. "I feel sure she never can have loved him."

"Indeed you are wrong there. I know she cared a great deal for Mr. Lee," Lucy exclaimed earnestly. "When I went to her room last night, I found her crying, with his picture in her hand, and she had a box of his letters open before her. I hope it is not dishonourable to tell you this, but I want, so much, to undeceive you, if you indeed believe she was careless about her husband."

The girls had talked in low undertones; but Philip, who was close at hand, caught a word here and there, and his quick intellect supplied the rest. He drew nearer to them.

"Shall I tell you what I think about the matter?" he said, quietly. "I believe that Walter Lee's great abilities, his handsome person, and his goodness, dazzled Mrs. Lee so much that when she married him she fancied herself in love with him; but that, as they lived together, their ideas and natures proved so unsympathetic that a cold current of division always ran between them. I judge this from my knowledge of their respective characters. Now that he is gone, she grieves, chiefly from an unacknowledged feeling gnawing at her heart, telling her that she does not really mourn his loss as such a man deserved to be regretted—and perhaps did not value him while he lived."

As Philip spoke he leaned against the embrasure of the window, near which Lucy sat, and his hand, accidentally, touched her soft hair. The contact sent a thrill of pleasure tingling through his veins,

and brought a deep blush into her fair face. Eva was looking sadly out into the clouds of fog and mist surrounding the house. The weather was beginning to brighten, and you could by this time get glimpses, here and there, of the view. Now a green field, now a great leafy tree was seen. In a somewhat similar manner scenes of the past life were rising up in pictures before Evasia Ussher's mind, out of the obscurity of vanished days.

"How keen you are, Philip," she observed, absently. "You see things almost as if you were a woman."

He made her an amused obeisance, saying that that compliment was one few men would care to receive. At this moment a note was brought in to Bob, who took it from the servant with a half-smothered exclamation of delight. He threw his book aside, and ran away to his own room, holding the envelope, still unopened, in his hand. From which sanctuary he did not reappear until luncheon time, when his spirits were so exuberantly high that his brother nick-named him Bellerophon, or Pegasus.

Lucy was sitting opposite to one of the windows, beside Philip, to whose lot it generally fell to take her in to every meal, as the more important guest naturally went with the master of the house. A sudden gleam of bright light danced across the room just then, and illumined her with a halo of golden sunshine.

"It is going to be a lovely afternoon," she said, speaking out of her dazzling surroundings. "Everything will look fresh out of doors after the rain. We ought to go and behold the beauties of nature."

"I see them here," he whispered, gazing so earnestly and steadfastly into her blue eyes that she turned away in confusion: and thus met the cold, indignant glance of the mistress of the house.

"Philip used to have plenty of common sense, but he seems to be for the time bewitched by this wretched girl," Lady Ussher was murmuring to herself. "She is of good family, and we can't put her down as we might a common companion."

It was now quite plain to her ladyship that her plan of a union between her son and the rich young widow had little chance of being carried into effect. Her chief desire was to see her visitors depart. In the meantime she resolved to reason with Philip, without further delay, upon what she called the extreme impropriety of his behaviour with regard to Miss Campbell. "He has no right to delude a girl in her position into the belief that she is on a sufficient equality with him to allow of her indulging in a flirtation," she concluded, angrily.

William Stuart's face beamed with happiness to-day, as he took his seat at the luncheon-table, for fortune gave him a place next to Anabel. He resolved to forget the cloudy future for this one hour, to enjoy the blessed present: but his would-be oblivion, with regard to what coming days might have in store for him, was rudely broken in upon. For Mrs. Lee suddenly asked him what profession he in-

tended to take up, and looked at him, with deep interest gleaming in her beautiful eyes, as she waited for his answer.

"I don't know," he replied, gloomily. "I came here chiefly that I might have time to look about me, but I have not made up my mind to anything yet. Whatever I take to it is not likely that I shall meet with much success, for I belong to an unlucky clan."

"How is that?" she inquired, smiling. He had suddenly fallen into despondency so deep that it was hard to avoid the betrayal of amusement.

"King Charles lost his head; his family lost the throne; we lost our chief, and our good fortune," he exclaimed. Anabel's smile brimmed over into a laugh.

"Is that all?" she said. "Perhaps I belong to an unlucky clan, too, for I know my father came of a Highland family."

If she desired to rouse the tutor into forgetfulness of his own prospects, she succeeded in her purpose. He was at once all excitement and interest upon this new topic, and wanted to learn from what part of Scotland her ancestors had sprung. The young widow seemed rather careless about her own descent just now, however: she was, at the moment, intent on watching Bob. He was filling his pockets with all the good things of a portable sort which were within his reach, or which could be stuffed into those receptacles. Some soft sweet cakes, and a dish of figs disappeared; he then attempted to dispose of a couple of large over-ripe oranges, but, in order to get these into their berth, he had to draw forth a large loose purse, full of treasures. He held up his money-bag to his sister, saying reproachfully that she had long ago promised to mend it for him.

"I can't perceive any tear," she answered.

"Put on your spectacles, and you will see fast enough."

"If there was anything worth looking at, I might put them on."

"If you only look in this direction you will see me," Philip remarked, with cool gravity: at which there was a laugh.

The whole party of young people, amongst whom it is only courteous to include the middle-aged officer, went out for a ramble about the pleasure-grounds that afternoon. This proved a great source of delight to a pet dog of Philip's. The little animal was a terrier, and most devoted to its master, who had named him Pixie. The two were inseparable when out of doors. The young man continually stooped to caress his little friend as he walked through the grounds this day, and once took the dog up in his arms, to examine into the cause of some half imaginary lameness. But a trial came for Pixie towards the end of the walk. Everyone turned into the enclosed shrubberies and gardens, through a gate opening off the great avenue, and within this portal no animal was ever allowed to pass. Philip shut the door upon the little dog's wistful, melancholy face, and hurried away from the sound of the whine of sorrow his favourite set up. He and Lucy were

behind the rest of the party. Bob had carried his sister off to look at a plant in which he took an interest, and which grew in a distant part of the garden. The three remaining promenaders were a little in advance upon the path. Anabel carried herself badly when on foot, as do most persons who have made a practice, as she had, from her youth, of rarely taking exercise except upon horseback. Philip was, on the contrary, a good and graceful walker, in spite of his ill health; and he went along now with as erect a carriage, and as light and elastic a step as though weakness and he had never been partners. He was extremely observant and fastidious as regards everything concerning a woman's gait, and he could not just then restrain himself from passing mental strictures upon the rather ungainly mode of progression used by the small, plump, black-robed figure before him.

At this moment all who were within earshot were startled by a sudden shriek of agony coming in upon the loud rumbling noise made by some vehicle passing slowly up the avenue, and followed by a clamour of angry voices. Everyone hastened back to the gate. Through some mischance, poor Pixie had been crushed under the wheel of a heavily-laden cart, and was now lying in the agonies of death. Labourers and servants had already gathered in numbers about the scene of the disaster. The trunk of a large fallen tree lay outside the garden door, and upon this Philip sat down, taking his dying friend into his arms. His sorrow was too deep for speech. Lucy stood silently by him for a few moments, and then turned and fled away into the house, the door of which stood open. She was found some time after by Mrs. Lee in her own room, lying upon a low couch, with her face buried in the cushions, in convulsions of hysterical sobs and tears.

"Oh, Anabel, Anabel," she cried, throwing herself into her friend's arms, "you must take me out of this house. If you will not come at once, I shall have to run away from you. I cannot stay here any longer, and I will not."

"And all because a little dog has died!" the young widow said, sarcastically.

"You know it is not that," Lucy sobbed out, indignantly. Anabel disengaged herself, and brought a glass of cold water from the toilet-table, saying, "Now my dear, just drink this, and then lie down again and go to sleep, while I sit here, at your table and write a letter for the evening mail. If you don't stop crying, you will be a pretty figure by dinner time."

"I shall not go down to dinner," said Lucy.

"Indeed, but you will. We are to be here only for a few days longer; and, if I can help it, there shall be no fuss made about us in the house, while we are present at any rate."

Lucy rose, and walked up and down the room, wringing her hands as she went.

"There is no one in the whole world, I believe, so miserable as I am," she moaned, passionately. "I have no home to go to, and no relations who care about me. I have just nothing in life but the power of seeing how wretched I am."

"Nonsense, child," returned Mrs. Lee, almost sharply. "You had much better do as I have told you. The accident has upset you. Lie down on the sofa, and go to sleep for awhile. The world is really not going to be half so miserable a place for you to live in as you are imagining. I can assure you I am a very good prophet."

The six o'clock dressing bell had rung out its noisy summons that same evening, when Mr. Stuart hurried down stairs, hoping to find Lady Ussher before she went to her chamber. She and Eva were in the library. He told her that his pupil was complaining of a bad headache, and had locked himself in his bedroom, declaring he would take no dinner. Lady Ussher said she supposed her darling was knocked up from hearing of that horrid accident; but her daughter observed that it was much more likely Bob had made himself ill by eating all the sweet things he had taken from the luncheon-table. They both tried to persuade the boy to let them go in and do something for him; but he was obdurate, and refused to open his door, saying that all he wanted, or wished for, was to be left alone in peace, so that he might have a sleep. When all persuasions proved useless, he was at last allowed to have his own way unmolested.

The ladies went into the dining-room without much ceremony that day, for Browne came to Lady Ussher with a message to the effect that she was not to wait for either his master or for Colonel Foster. The dinner had hardly been commenced, however, when the two gentlemen appeared. Philip slipped into his usual place beside Lucy, and made a feint at eating, and an attempt at keeping up his usual lively flow of talk: but the meal would have been dull and gloomy had not Sir John exerted himself to entertain his guests: and he could be a most agreeable host. He and Lady Ussher went together into the library after dinner, leaving the younger people to do as they would. This was Colonel Foster's last day at Ussher Court, and he went out for a long walk. Eva also went out, having been summoned to visit a sick woman in the neighbourhood, in whom she was much interested. The tutor went upstairs to look after his pupil; and thus it happened that the heir of the house was left to entertain the two lady visitors.

He proposed to read aloud to them a new poem, "Tannhäuser," and they began to work, and appeared to listen. I say appeared, for their thoughts were far too busy with their own affairs to be able to enter into the beautiful and deeply pathetic story of the recreant Knight and the fair Elizabeth. Anabel was certainly not attending

to the poetry. Every now and then she let her embroidery fall, and looked up with an air of expectancy. At last the door opened, and Mr. Stuart's handsome face appeared. He looked round the drawing-room, and then down at a paper he held in his hand, an expression of worry and perplexity overclouding his countenance, then departed as quickly and noiselessly as he had come.

The young widow started up, with a hasty apology to the reader, and followed him. Lucy rose to follow her; Anabel might need her, she said; but Philip threw his book aside, and caught her hand with a detaining grasp. It trembled in his clasp, and he saw that her eyes were red and swollen.

"Do not go, Lucy," he entreated: "I want you to stay with me always, if only you will consent to do so. You have shared a small grief with me to-day: will you not, for the future, take part in all my joys and sorrows?"

He drew her down beside him on a low couch, for both were too excited to stand; but she turned away, and covered her face with her hands. "Sir John and Lady Ussher—what would they say? Oh, it can never, never be as you wish," she whispered, in broken and scarcely audible tones.

"They will object, I suppose, of course," he said, sadly, "as my darling is not a great heiress; but I am old enough to choose for myself in this matter. I do not intend to let my happiness be wrecked, as Evasia's was. I have thought it all well over, and I feel sure we can manage to live very comfortably upon my own private income, which is what we shall have to depend on. Will you not be my wife, Lucy?"

She was longing to let herself realise all the blessedness that must be in store for her in the course of a life spent with him; but, even as she let him draw her nearer to him, she turned aside again, overwhelmed with misgivings, and by a dread lest she was acting dishonourably only in listening to him.

"I see how it is," he exclaimed, a little bitterly. "You are afraid to have anything to say to so wretched an invalid as I unfortunately sometimes am."

This accusation was too much for Lucy's strength of mind. She burst into tears, and allowed him to comfort her as he chose.

In the meantime, Anabel had overtaken the tutor in the hall, where he stood meditating in some perplexity, stroking his soft beard the while. He had knocked gently at his pupil's door directly after dinner, but Bob returned no answer. From this, William Stuart gathered that the boy was asleep. After a little delay he again went to the room; and, as all was still silent within, he again tried to turn the handle of the door. It yielded to his touch, for the bolt was no longer shot, and he found himself upon the threshold of an untenanted apartment. Bob's bed was empty, and untumbled, and he was not in any part of the chamber. An open letter lay

upon the floor, and this the perplexed young man now showed to Anabel.

"It seems to be a note," he said, "and, if it is, it may give some clue to the boy's whereabouts, but I have puzzled myself over the sheet in vain. The epistle, if it be indeed a letter, has been written in some kind of cypher, incomprehensible to me."

She took the paper out of his hand, and studied it attentively. Its contents ran as follows:

"Expensive 1*s.*—I expect 6 U 7.—Yours, 6*d.*"

After a few minutes she began to laugh heartily. "Has not Bob some friend in this neighbourhood of the name of Tanner?" she asked. "I think he mentioned such a person the day that Lucy and I arrived: when he returned to us after his escapade at the station."

Mr. Stuart assented.

"And has there not been some plan on foot; some pleasuring got up by this young man, in which Bob wanted to take part, and in which his parents did not wish him to join?" Anabel continued.

Her companion looked at her with a wondering gaze. "I can't remember anything of the sort," he answered. "Stay, though—yes—Tanner asked the young fellow to go out with him for a night's sea-fishing, and Lady Ussher would not hear of it. Bob was very angry about the disappointment."

"I feel quite sure that your pupil has set off upon that delightful excursion now," the young widow observed, sagaciously. "See, this is how you are to read this hieroglyphical epistle, which is written in school-boy slang:

"'Dear Bob,—I expect you between six and seven.

'Yours, Tanner.'"

"We have come to the bottom of the lad's bad headache at last," the tutor exclaimed, laughing. "How cleverly you have made the puzzle out! I never should have thought it could prove useful to get oneself up in slang."

"Everything is useful, one time or another," Anabel said, rather absently. "But what do you purpose doing now?"

"I suppose I must go off in pursuit," was the rueful answer. "The wind is rising, and I think we are likely to have both a wet and stormy night. In any case, Lady Ussher would be in dire despair at Bob's being out late on the water, even if the sea were as calm as a mill-pond. When I am missed you will explain matters for me, I am sure: you are so good," he murmured, taking her hand into his. He dropped it almost instantaneously again, as if the touch of that small shapely palm had stung and wounded him. "I beg your pardon," he cried, hastily, and as it would appear, angrily.

She said nothing, but waited in the hall while he got on his coat

and hat, standing upon the doorstep to see him off. "I wish you success in your quest," she exclaimed. "I should dearly like to be going for a walk down to the shore to-night also. If only we women dared do as we would!" and Mrs. Lee sighed bitterly.

"If only we men could dare where we would!" William Stuart muttered, below his breath, as he pursued his way with a quick elastic step.

He had to walk a distance of nearly two miles, in order to gain the sea-side. Here he turned into a fisherman's cottage, to make inquiries. The man said he had seen the truant go out of the harbour a couple of hours before in young Mr. Tanner's yawl. He was himself just about to set off, also, on a fishing excursion; but, on the promise of a liberal reward, he agreed to put his skiff and arms at the tutor's service, for so long as he should require them.

The two had a tiresome row, but at last they descried the right boat; and they drew alongside it, just as the evening shadows were beginning to thicken into twilight. Bob was lying on the flat of his back, a prey to all the agonies of sea-sickness, against which he had believed himself quite secure, having never before experienced the terribly nauseating effect of sitting in a cockle shell at anchor, and swinging monotonously with the tide. One of the sailors held the boats together, while another lifted the groaning sufferer into his tutor's arms.

When the boat was once in motion again Bob recovered rapidly, but he bore, with exemplary and stolid equanimity, the various jibes and jokes which his tutor found it impossible to avoid throwing at him on their homeward journey. The lad winced on only one occasion, when the remark was made that it seemed there were two who could play at wounded soldiers, and at being lifted about the world.

There was, of course, a great commotion at Ussher Court about his escapade, and he was in dire disgrace with the home authorities next day. Anabel took pity on his gloomy looks, and carried him off to the gardens in the afternoon, to walk and talk with her. They had been alone together for some time, when she, hesitatingly, asked him if he liked Mr. Stuart.

"Oh, yes!" the boy answered, warmly. "He is a jolly good fellow; a brick, if ever there was one in the world;" and his hearer loved the speaker for the sake of this speech.

"I wonder why your sister Eva is always so sad and quiet?" the young widow said, while she stopped to gather a rose: for the question chanced to occur to her.

Bob assumed a confidential manner at once. "It is all owing to that nice fellow, Walter Lee," he observed, sagaciously. "The two were just awful spoons on one another, but mother wouldn't let them get married, because he hadn't money enough, and then he went

away and —— Oh! I beg your pardon," he cried, interrupting himself, his cheeks flaming with distress and confusion: "I did not once remember that he was—your—husband!"

"Never mind," she replied, coldly, plucking her rose to pieces as she walked along the path. She pulled for herself a little nosegay of sweetwilliam in the place of it, and wore the bouquet as a breast-knot all the evening, but no one understood the significancy of that action except Philip Ussher, who saw nearly everything that went on before him. Colonel Foster went away that day, and it was settled then that the ladies were to leave on the following Saturday. Lucy was longing for the night to come; she was eagerly looking forward to the opportunity which she hoped that would bring her of pouring out her tale of happiness to her friend, and of consulting her as to whether she could lawfully and honourably accept Philip's love. Anabel had been so much excited the previous evening about Bob's disappearance and its results, that she had not been in tune for listening to any narration or for offering any advice. Lucy's story remained untold this night also, however, for when the young girl tapped at the door of her patroness's room, Anabel called out to say that they could have no talk then, as she was very busy. Her employment consisted in tearing up a number of letters into the smallest possible fragments, with which she strewed the floor around her, to the great discomfiture of the housemaid, whose business it was to make up the visitors' apartments. When the love-tale was, at last, related, Lucy was roused with gentle indignation by the way in which it was received. Her honourable scruples were laughed to the winds, and her lover was spoken of with ridicule and scorn.

"My dear, I only wish you had found some one more worthy of you," Anabel said. "But a man who plays the piano, and faints, and reads poetry aloud, would certainly not be to my taste."

On this same evening, Lady Ussher had made her way to her son Philip's room, bent upon remonstrating with him and making him, as she would say, "hear reason." She was thunderstruck when he quietly explained to her what his intentions were with regard to the despised girl. But when he went on to say that he was already an engaged man, her very lips grew white with indignation and smothered anger.

"May I inquire what you propose supporting yourself and your wife upon?" she asked, coldly.

"We must make my own private income suffice," he answered. "Unless I can succeed in obtaining some employment."

"Hitherto, although you have been alone, it has not ever proved sufficient even to pay and keep Browne," she remarked, sarcastically. "Your father has always borne his expenses."

"Browne must go, of course," Philip answered, firmly; but he felt sad at the thought of parting with a servant endeared to him by long and faithful devotion.

It was arranged that the two days previous to the guests' departure should be sacrificed to the claims of society. Many of the county families had shown attention to the young widow, and it was only right that she should pay a round of farewell visits before leaving Ussher Court. But when the carriage came to the door on Thursday Anabel was suffering from a severe nervous headache, and was quite unequal to any effort. She gave her card-case to Lady Ussher, however, and entreated that no alteration should be made in the day's proceedings on her account, saying that her maid could do everything for her she might require. Her hostess assented to her wishes; but her face darkened when she saw her daughter and Lucy come down stairs together, dressed ready for the drive. The latter had unwillingly prepared herself for what was, to her, a painful ordeal, in obedience to the commands of her patroness, and to the entreaties of Eva. She trembled, now, under the cold glance cast on her by Lady Ussher, and turned a reproachful and mutely appealing look upon Eva. Philip came out of the library at the moment and saw this piteous gaze. When he discovered that there was to be a vacant seat in the carriage, he at once proposed that he should occupy it; but his mother hastily negatived the idea, and he yielded to her wish without dispute, and tried to console himself under the disappointment by setting forth upon a solitary walk. Bob and his tutor had left the house in the early morning, with the intention of spending a long day fishing in some distant river.

As the afternoon wore away, Anabel's headache got better. She was lying half asleep in her room, when she felt a sudden and irresistible longing for a waft of the sea breezes. She rose, dressed herself, and left Ussher Court alone, silencing the remonstrances of her maid by assuring her that a walk to the seaside would complete the cure already begun by rest and quietness.

When Mrs. Lee reached the water's edge, she sat down on a large stone and fell into a reverie, taking her hat off and letting the cooling wind blow her hair about. After a time she got up, and began to pace backwards and forwards on a portion of the beach, still deep in meditation, but no longer bareheaded. The shore was very extensive in this neighbourhood, stretching along for miles of uneven winding strand, intercepted here and there by jutting rocks, and bounded by sloping cliffs and hills of sand. As Anabel continued her lonely walk, she was startled, now and again, by a cry which she took, at first, to be the note of a curlew, or of some other sea bird. As it was repeated, however, it took to her ear the form of the words, "Help! help!" When this idea gained possession of her, she went rapidly on in the direction from which the sound came; and, at last, upon turning round a projection of large boulders, heaped together, and covered with damp seaweed, she ascertained that her imagination had not deceived her: some one was lying on the ground at a little distance off; and was now, once more, calling thus for help.

On approaching the recumbent figure, she recognised Philip Ussher, who was stretched at full length upon the shingle, his head being supported on a stone. He looked so composed, and so entirely at his ease, as he smiled a welcome to her, that a feeling of indignant irritation rose up in Mrs. Lee's mind: she believed that he had summoned her as a sort of practical joke. She was quickly undeceived, however. He had fallen a couple of hours before, his foot slipping between some large loose flints, which had either broken or severely sprained his ankle. He had succeeded in sitting himself into a position in which he was now tolerably easy, but the slightest movement caused him agony, which brought a deathlike pallor into his face.

"You are the first person I have seen all this time," he said, glancing up at her, and then at the advancing tide. "You have not come a moment too soon, for, as you see, I am lying far below watermark. If I were like any other man," he added sadly, "I might manage to creep up out of danger, no matter what pain it cost me to do so; but any great suffering, or over-fatigue, or, indeed, even any disagreeable mental shock, brings a deadly faintness upon me, and I know that if I fall into a swoon here, with no means of relief at hand, I shall, in all probability, die in it."

He spoke calmly: but Anabel's pulses beat fast, and a mist seemed to rise before her eyes.

"How can you lie here so quietly, and take it all in this every day kind of way?" she gasped. "If I were in your place I could not help shrieking out with terror. I think I should beat myself against the stones—do anything to make me forget those creeping waves."

"I don't believe you would be such a coward at all," he said, looking up at her, with a light of reassuring confidence shining in his grey eyes. "I have been thinking of some of the many brave men who have met far more terrible deaths than that which threatens me, with the happiest faith and steadiness. But if you are to aid me, it must be at once."

"What shall I do?" she cried. "Shall I go, or try to send for your own man; or shall I hunt about for some of the fishermen?"

"It is better to try and get Browne here. You would only lose time in looking for the labouring people; they are, probably, all busy, away at their different employments. Besides, my foot is in such a dreadful state that I feel as if any arm but his must be the death of me." He drew a morsel of paper from his pocket, and wrote a few lines upon it, telling the exact part of the shore upon which he lay. "You may see some one on the road towards the Court, who can go faster than you would be able to walk. If you do, send this on. My love to Lucy, if you are not back in time," he added, as she turned away.

"I will get you help before it is too late, if I die in the effort,"

she cried, with rash impulsiveness, in broken sobbing tones, as she hurried off.

The neighbourhood of the coast was always lonely; to-day it seemed to be particularly deserted. Anabel had got over a mile of her anxious journey before she met anyone. This person was a man on horseback, who readily undertook to deliver the important message at the great house.

Having seen him ride off at full speed, Mrs. Lee retraced her steps to the strand. She found Philip sleeping tranquilly with a smile upon his parted lips, although the feeling of weariness and distress, caused by his constrained position, betrayed itself in all the lines of his face.

"I was dreaming of Lucy," he said, when he had become aware of Anabel's presence. "I thought we were meeting in the better land, after a long separation. I feel sure that is how it must be, for help can hardly arrive in time now: and no doubt things are better so; even for her it may perhaps be best. I have certainly had every right to expect to be, hereafter, a strong and sound man. Doctors have always held out the prospect to me, but, at present, I am often only a burthen to myself and to other people. You will assure my darling of my faithful affection."

"Oh, don't, don't," entreated his companion, throwing herself on the ground at his feet, and sobbing passionately.

"You would force me to be unhappy, when I have not been so hitherto," he said, faintly, making some uneasy motion, which brought a smothered exclamation of pain to his lips. Then silence fell upon them both, as they waited, and watched the waves creeping nearer and nearer, with a lapping, greedy, gurgling sound.

"It is horrible!" Anabel cried, suddenly, in a harsh, discordant voice.

"I have been for a long time trying to understand how it would be possible to unite one's will in everything with the Higher Will," Philip said softly, half to himself: "and I think I must have learned more about it than I had believed. I feel so perfectly content now. I will just wait for what He wills to do with me, and the feeling is better than anything else I have ever experienced."

"Do you mean to say that you are pleased to give up the beautiful world, your fair prospects—Lucy—everything?" she asked, almost angrily.

"'Of a truth he is very covetous for whom God will not suffice,'" Philip answered, quietly.

The waves crept ever nearer and nearer. At last, Anabel stood up, for the waters dashed over the skirt of her dress. She moaned heavily; her face was pale and rigid.

"I wish you would go up on the cliffs, behind, where you would be safe," her companion said; but she shook her head and shuddered.

"I can escape at any moment," she whispered hoarsely. "I will stay with you while I may."

"If you will not go would you sit up here by me, and hold my hand in yours?" he entreated, for he was anxious to try and impart some of his own peaceful confidence to her by that mysterious medium, personal contact.

They had not been long placed thus, side by side together, before the waves began to wash away the sand underneath the stones upon which the sufferer's feet were supported. He clenched his hand at the torture this caused. Anabel turned aside and strained every nerve in an intense, agonising effort to catch any sound, except the swirl of the rushing tide; but her endeavour was vain. All the voices of nature seemed concentrated in that noise, and in that alone. At this instant, a dash of spray spattered upon her face. She looked round and saw that Philip was wet up to his knees, while the retreating water was carrying out a quantity of the gravel upon which he lay. His hand trembled in hers, and became icy cold; large beads of moisture gathered on his face, which was now of an ashy hue. She wiped his forehead. "Are you in pain?" she asked. His lips formed an affirmative answer, but no sound came from them, and she perceived that he was rapidly becoming unconscious. She tried to shriek the words, "Will they never come?" but the parched mouth refused to utter an audible sentence. Her whole soul went up, however, in a wild mental prayer to Heaven, and a few minutes later she was hardly surprised to hear what she took to be supernatural voices answering her. But help was sent in a bodily form. She saw several men come round the projecting ridge of stones, a short way from where she sat, wading in water almost up to their waists; and then Browne stood beside her and took his master into his arms.

She and Lucy sobbed and cried upon each other's necks that evening.

"I have changed my mind," Anabel said. "I do not feel sure now that you are quite worthy of your lover."

"And I know I am not," was the young girl's tearful and passionate reply.

The letters were always laid upon the breakfast-table at Ussher Court; and this next morning as usual Anabel seemed greatly pleased with a short epistle she received. When she had glanced through it, she looked across the daintily spread board at Lucy, whose face was pale and sorrowful. Her thoughts were evidently with her lover, who lay on a sofa in the library. Bob sat next to her, and he was taking advantage of her abstraction of mind by stealing away an unopened envelope. He fancied it would be an excellent joke if he could succeed in pocketing this unobserved; and was considering at what hour of the day he should return it, when the young widow spoke suddenly to his tutor, who was also eating his breakfast in silent thoughtfulness. A great change had come over William Stuart's whole demeanour and appearance within the last few days. His voice was

no longer confident and gay; his brow was moody, and his eyes gleamed flashes of angry discontent, rather than sunshine and merriment, as of old. He started when Mrs. Lee addressed him, apologising to her for his inattention.

"I only told you that you ought to keep Bob in better order," she replied, smilingly. "I see he is purloining a letter from his neighbour. He does not seem to know what a great lady he is trying to play tricks upon."

Lucy turned her blue eyes reproachfully upon her friend. "A great lady! What do you mean?" she said.

"I mean, my dear, that you are a great heiress. I have just had a letter from your uncle, that very wealthy old bachelor. He tells me that he is, at once, about to make what he calls a suitable settlement upon you, while you are eventually to possess his whole property. I should say he is worth, at the least, five or six thousand a year. So you see I did right in calling you a great lady."

I need hardly dwell upon the sensation that this open announcement of Lucy's splendid prospects made in the household. No one felt more astonished at the change in her fortune than did the principal person concerned. Her father, a poor clergyman, had married a portionless Italian maiden, and had given deep offence to his rich brother by so doing. The latter had cast off all affectionate connection with the struggling couple; but, when their child was left a portionless orphan, he had interested himself a little in her fate. He had been appointed one of Anabel's guardians, and it was at his request that she had, on her widowhood, taken Lucy to live with her as a companion. It was very improbable, however, that he would have troubled himself any more about her, had not Mrs. Lee written to tell him that her protégée had made a conquest at Ussher Court of no less a person than Sir John Ussher's eldest son and heir.

"Of course, dear Lucy must not think of leaving us while poor Philip is laid up with his foot," Lady Ussher said that afternoon, drawing her future daughter-in-law to her side, and imprinting a kiss upon her fair cheek.

But Anabel was to leave next day; and, in spite of the pleasure she felt in her friend's happiness, she was oppressed by a weight of care and uneasiness. William Stuart, as I said before, was also moody and heavy-hearted. He and the young widow, Eva, and Bob, spent that last evening in the gardens. When it began to grow dusk, the two former suddenly found themselves alone together. A great tree shivered and whispered above their heads. Underneath this a rustic seat had been placed. They sat down, but very unsociably far apart. There was silence between them, but they did not find it more golden than speech. On the contrary, the heart of each was possessed by a bitter jealousy of all Nature's creatures, animate and inanimate, by which they were surrounded. The birds, the breezes, the distant brooks, and the mur-

muring grasses, all could discourse after their fashion with their kind. For them alone it seemed as if there existed no language in which to convey the thoughts burning and consuming their separate souls.

At last Anabel sighed and spoke, uttering a very commonplace remark. "Had you ever your fortune told?" she inquired.

He answered her by simply ejaculating the monosyllable, "No."

"I once had," she went on, timidly pursuing the same subject. "A gipsy read my hand, and she told me I was to be—twice married."

"The second husband was to be a prince, of course," her companion rejoined, sarcastically.

She paid no attention to the rudeness of his manner; but, giving a little gasp for breath, she began again, speaking coolly and deliberately, as though reciting a lesson learned off by heart. "I do not intend to marry a rich man, or a grand man. I will not marry an old man, either."

"Would you marry me?" he said, with almost savage abruptness.

"If you asked me properly, perhaps I might," Anabel answered, breaking forth into a sob of distress.

After that they both made rapid progress in the science of interchanging thought by speech, and there was no longer a wide space between them upon the rustic seat.

"Do you know what I was invited to Ussher Court for?" Anabel asked, suddenly, as they rose to return indoors.

"No; unless just to pay a visit — and perhaps to meet me," William Stuart replied, with a glance which was at the same time wondering and full of mirthful glee.

"I was brought here expressly to marry Philip Ussher," the young widow said, with a very solemn air.

"What!" exclaimed her companion, speaking in tones of alarmed surprise. "Then, in that case, as things are now, I suppose I shall lose my situation?"

"I should have imagined that, as things are now, you must, in any case, have lost it," Anabel answered, demurely.

"I WOULD BE A SHAKESPEARE."

"What would you like to be?"—A group of boys stood round me,
And I questioned half in merriment, but the faces grew intent,
And replies were promptly rendered, as though little thought were needed;
Each had some favourite fancy, or at least some natural bent.

"I should like to be a soldier," "I a sailor," were the answers;
"An engineer," "a farmer," "a harlequin," "a clerk"—
One voice alone was silent, but the eager lips were parted,
And the deep grey eyes gleamed full of light beneath their lashes dark.

"And you?" I asked with interest, turning towards the stooping figure.
Then the colour flushed with feeling the smooth young cheek and brow:
"I should like to be a Shakespeare"—and, though a mocking laugh rang round him,
The boy was far too earnest his choice to disavow.

I smiled myself and ventured,—"You may be perhaps a poet,
But"—and then I stopped abruptly: leave time its work to do;
Let experience, the stern teacher, dissolve the dream when need be;
Why bring up earth's cold mists to cloud the heaven's ethereal blue?

When the morning yet is fresh, and all the air is laden
With the scent of rosy blossoms blown in hope's sunny dells,
Why summon heat of noonday to dry up dew and fragrance?
Why drown with fact's harsh clangour the ring of fairy bells?

So I moralized demurely:—"You take a lofty model;
But the noblest is the safest; we cannot aim too high;
Who keeps his eyes upon the ground will trip at points of danger;
He climbs the best who fearless treads, his gaze upon the sky."

The boy drank in my common words as though the draught were nectar;
His eyes caught added radiance from a glowing inward fire;
His heart spoke through his raptured face—"Then the dream is not all folly:
Better to try and not succeed than never to aspire."

He left the noisy circle—his compeers and his playmates—
The lads of boisterous spirits, sharper wits, but smaller soul,
And passed into the shadowy world to win a crown of laurel
For the brow where glimmered even now a mystic aureole.

"I should like to be a Shakespeare!" You will be perchance a hero—
A dauntless battler for the right; the foe of all things wrong;
A martyr to some worthy cause; the friend of truth and justice;
An upholder of the law that guards the weak against the strong.

This were grander than your vision; yet our Master points still higher:
Bids us look to Him whose splendour fills the boundless heavens above;
Be perfect e'en as He—the great God and gracious Father;
Copy line by line the pattern He has lent us in His love.

Raise your standard to this loftiest height, you would-be king of poets;
Take Christ as your ideal; make your life a noble song;
Let your soul be that perfection which includes all lesser beauties;
For what were even Shakespeare's gift 'mong the glorious angel throng?

Emma Rhodes.

M. ELLEN EDWARDS.

J. SWAIN.

THE ARGOSY.

AUGUST, 1877.

GABRIEL'S APPOINTMENT.

CHAPTER XXII.

BEFORE THE WEDDING.

A BRIGHT and happy festival season, by the seaside, succeeded to the anxious vigils of those weeks in the City; and Gabriel and Edith, passing nearly all their time together, basked in the sunshine of their prosperous love, and looked as if care and trouble could never touch them more. The peculiar circumstances of their engagement, making him dependent on her tenderness, had left Edith Leicester no time for reserve or doubts; as Tiny said, the wooing was put off till after the wedding, on account of the bridegroom's health; and the rule meanwhile, as between convalescent and nurse, appeared to be that he might ask or claim whatever he pleased, so long as he earned it by growing strong and well.

Strong and well he could not become at a moment's notice, even under such happy auspices; but he was mending by steady degrees, and, but for vigilant watching, might prematurely have overtasked his strength. As it was, between rides on the downs and strollings by the shore—watching the sunset at one time, and the moonlight at another—books, music and conversation—his hours were tolerably taken up, without the perilous excitement he was ordered to avoid.

The wedding was to take place in the last week of April, and David Forrest—to whom, as to many other hard workers, the season had brought a welcome though brief period of relaxation—timed his holiday that he might comply with the general request and perform the service. Arriving, as usual, at the last moment, he was hurried by the guard into the nearest carriage, where two gentlemen were talking so eagerly behind their newspapers that they hardly noticed his entrance. It was some little time before he noticed them, but

their discussion waxing warm, they forgot the caution they had preserved at first, and names were spoken aloud which could not but attract his ear.

"I tell you it is a positive fact. Burlington Ford was taxed with it, and could only say, like poor Dickens's old Frenchman, that everything was possible. That was a great admission from one who never admits anything he can help."

"Well, it may be true, but the fair Helen must have altered not a little in her tastes. I remember the day when the best authority made her over to Gabriel Bruce—long before he took to gold-digging."

"She would have been very much obliged if the authority had been good enough to make good his words; but there never was a chance. Bruce behaved very well, I recollect—for he was invited, and fêted, and flattered, as everybody could see—but he contrived to let it be seen that it wouldn't do. And Strahan will be able to give her a good settlement, which is, after all, the essential point."

"I can't believe that Strahan is in earnest. Why, it was only the other day people were speculating about him and Miss Leicester. Do you mean to say that they are both going to console themselves by uniting their griefs?"

"Something very like it; and what's more, it is said that the fair lady has been moved to consent by the whisper that the diamonds of the late Lady Strahan will eventually come to herself—I don't exactly know how."

"Strahan does, you may depend; and that accounts for your story—only he happens to have a daughter living."

"Yes, but don't you know ——" And here the voices dropped, and the noise of the train drowned all the rest of the conversation.

It had furnished David with matter for reflection during the greater part of the journey, and it was with a sense of relief that he saw Hartley Carroll waiting for him at the end of it. Philip Forrest had been sent for at the last moment, and had yielded to the general petition that his brother might be spared to his friends the first evening.

"He may not be at liberty for some hours, and it is as much as your life is worth to meddle with parish work while you are here, so your only safety is with us. No broken heads this time in the train, I hope? Any clue to your mystery?"

"Not exactly a clue. Indeed, the attempts to find one have done us more harm than good. As far as I am concerned, I only want the police to let us alone."

"I saw something in the paper about a missing boy being suspected. Is that the case?"

"A boy is missing, certainly; and so long as this commotion is kept up, I don't see how we are to get him back. I would rather have lost twice as much by the fire, and kept the poor lad."

"I understood he was one of your idlest, most incurable of little rascals. Does that add to his value?"

"Yes, for it adds to his danger. I have done all I could by speaking to the authorities, and got them to promise he shall not be scared away if he has a mind to come back; so I hope still. How are you all getting on?"

"You will hardly know your patient again, though we are cautioned that he must not play tricks with himself. We may well take care of him, for he is the best fellow in the world, and Sir Matthew was perfectly right—he would have been quite thrown away as a poor man."

"He is as generous-hearted as ever," said David, not forgetful of the startling aspect of his offertory bag after Gabriel's last appearance in the chapel. "I hope he may not be paying too high for his good fortune. Business matters are all arranged by this time, of course."

"His friend Herbert is down here, and all the settlements have been attended to. And what is more, Forrest, I don't mind telling you a bit of a secret—he has twisted the legs of the old man of the sea off my neck, and for an old married man as I am, I feel mightily inclined to throw my hat in the air, and whoop."

David's look and manner invited further confidence, and Hartley confessed that he had been in some difficulty of late for want of fresh capital, which he could only obtain through Strahan, and that on perilous terms; that Bruce had in the noblest way arranged to embark the bulk of his fortune in the business, so that both difficulty and danger would be removed—a service which Hartley could hardly have expected, but which he trusted to repay tenfold in profits.

"And can you insure him against risk?" asked David.

"As to that, he will not run any that I do not share. No man can pretend to entire safety, or, if he does, people are very silly to believe him; but you would have no City of London worth mentioning, Master Davie, if nobody ever ran any risks in business."

"You seem to have gone rather too far in that line, by your own account. I would not be too sure that I had done with Strahan."

"Oh, I have no fears now on that score. He will be glad to get his money, now I can serve his turn no longer. Between ourselves, I hope he is attending to his own private affairs, instead of mine. Ah! you look as if you had heard something about it. Commend me to a parson for always knowing the last bit of gossip! What is it?"

"Not much; only talk in the train." And David briefly repeated what he had heard. Hartley shook his head.

"When I carried the report to my ladies, Edith was slow to believe it; but then it goes hard with any woman to realise that her loss can be so soon forgotten. It is a curious turn of events, but I begin to think it must be true."

So Edith herself thought, when she heard the rumour thus confirmed, but she was as far from understanding it as ever. The Fords were in apartments near them, and among the few guests invited to the wedding—and Helen Ford was often with her friends, and certainly with no outward signs of being engaged, or expecting so to be. Her spirits were generally even, and it was difficult to know from her conversation whether she were happy or otherwise. That evening, however, when she and her brother came, as they sometimes did, to tea, she seemed disposed to be a little more communicative.

"What accounts have you from Miss Kerr?" she asked Edith, while the gentlemen were all discussing some knotty point at the other end of the room. "Does she like her sitter? I fancied she might find the work more difficult than she thought."

Edith quoted some passages from Alice's letters: which were mostly in a cheerful strain, though the longing to see her friends again could not be concealed. She wrote warmly of Mrs. Salisbury's kindness, and of Myra generally with compassion.

"Ah!" said Helen Ford, "her very caution tells its own tale. That poor child is born to be a burden and misery to herself and everyone else, I am afraid."

"They give hopes of her gradual improvement."

"Her father has none; he confessed as much, and that it is out of kindness to Mrs. Salisbury that he has left her so long under her care. The poor old lady doats on the child, and I believe spoils her terribly, but no one can have the heart to interfere—at any rate, for the present. In time, of course, she must be with her father for part of the year."

Edith looked up inquiringly; her companion coloured a little and smiled.

"Is it really so, Helen?" asked Miss Leicester, softly. "Are Sir Jesse Strahan's family arrangements then becoming of so much interest to you?"

"It looks like it, does it not? But I am not surprised that you are slow of belief. I am not romantic, you know, Edith, and never was; and the older I grow, the less I see to make one hope ever to be really happy in this world, so a small amount of good is not to be despised. He is a friend of some years' standing; his position is good, and his influence large. I am quite aware how much he admired you, and that it was only lately his hopes were scattered to the winds; but, without flattery, I take it as a compliment to myself that he can imagine me capable of supplying your place."

"And it is settled, then? You have made up your mind?" said Edith, unable to conceal the regret with which she received the news.

"Oh, yes, my mind is made up," repeated Miss Ford, somewhat ironically; "made up to endure all that will be said or thought of

me for preferring sober commonplace comforts to heroism and genteel poverty."

"Preferring?"

"Yes—that implies a choice, does it not? I have been tempted in my time to think as you are thinking now; but I have seen so many wake up out of those dreams, to find all a dull blank reality, that I choose rather not to dream at all. I begin with the reality, so that I escape the disappointment."

"If you mean what you say, I am very sorry for you, Helen."

"Thank you, my dear, for your pity. When you require it, you shall have mine."

"I am sure of that; but, Helen, this at least I know: no sorrow or trouble can ever be more real than that which you call a dream. It is much more than I deserve; but there it is, and I see it and know it. To do what you are doing would be to me——" She checked herself as Helen's face darkened, and the sentence was left unfinished. Miss Ford made no reply, but, as if nothing had been said, took up a volume of Murray lying on the table, and began to talk of meeting on the Continent. What had they decided to do first? Edith said there was an idea of seeing the Bay of Naples, and if it were carried out, they wished to arrange for Alice Kerr to join them. It had been settled that she had better not interrupt her work to attend the wedding, but Gabriel had set his heart on giving her the trip afterwards. Their own plan was to spend a little time in Normandy first, and Alice might join them in Paris. Miss Ford heard and approved, and suggested that perhaps they should be able to bring her with them, and make up a party, at any rate for a little while. Burlington had some lectures to get up, which would compel him to visit one or two places about which his memory was hazy. They should be quite independent of each other, but it would be pleasant if their plans could be combined. Nothing more was said about Sir Jesse Strahan, and Edith could only acquiesce with a good grace. She still hoped that delay might prevent the marriage, but her friend's manner precluded all expression of feeling, and it was a relief when she took her departure and left Miss Leicester at liberty to ask her sister's opinion.

Mrs. Carroll received the intelligence very coolly.

"My dear," she said, "have you known Helen Ford so long without being aware that she is always wiser than other people—not only in seeing what nobody else can see, but in being blind to that which stares everybody in the face? If she has discovered what none of us could find in our friend Sir Jesse, she must either make herself happy with him, or own herself mistaken, which she never did yet; so, on the whole, I think it rather good news."

"These events are thickening round us in rather a startling manner," said Hartley. "Of course, Davie, you will stay to marry your own parishioner to the big Cornishman?"

"I hope so: but I was rather surprised to hear that my friend Joel was to be married so soon."

"Why should he wait?" said Gabriel. "He has plenty of money for one of his class, and I know no one who better deserves a good wife."

"I am glad of it, for Lucy Pyne is a good girl, and I shall miss her sadly. By the way, is her sister to be present?"

"No," said Edith, "and we cannot make it out. I wrote to her, and to Alice Kerr, offering to make any arrangement that might enable the sisters to be together; but Grace declined coming at all, and is to receive Lucy at Lowlevels. Lucy says little about it, but I know she thinks it strange, and so do I."

"Then you do not take Lucy abroad with you?"

"Oh, no, I am quite independent of a maid, and it is settled that she and Joel shall go and take care of the house, and perhaps send Martin after us."

"I would give something to hear you explaining art and history to the Ironhand; but what made Grace refuse to take the journey? Was it economy?"

"Scarcely, when I would have paid her expenses. I cannot understand it, for she evidently has some reason, which she does not like to give."

"I'll have a talk with Lucy to-morrow, and see what she thinks of the matter," said Mr. Forrest: and the subject was dropped for the time.

In private conversation that night with his brother Philip, it was, however, revived; for every event, however trivial, was of consequence now that seemed to be connected with the conspiracy against Gabriel's person. The last attempt was still unexplained; but David had learned from his small handmaiden, Sally, in a burst of confidential penitence, that a man round the corner had given her sweeties for bringing word what was done at the parsonage, and she had been told by Bill Close that something was going to happen which would give them a holiday and no end of half-crowns. The non-fulfilment of this latter clause had had some effect in stirring up her remorse, but she could throw no light on the boy's disappearance, whom she had last seen and heard shouting "Fire!" in the yard.

One circumstance had lately transpired; a helmet, of the Fire Brigade pattern, had been picked up, and traced to a small theatrical warehouse, which supplied some of the minor houses of entertainment with costumes. But no evidence appeared to show how recently it had been used for stage purposes, and the fear of frightening Bill Close away for ever had considerably damped the good priest's ardour in the investigation.

"They might have burned twice as much, and I should not have cared, if they had only left me my boy," he repeated with a sadness which his brother well understood. And he comforted him with the

assurance that he would probably see his young friend turn up in a few months' time, all the better for having been well thrashed on board a collier.

"You may depend upon it he has run away," said Philip, "and is seeking his fortune as cabin boy, and will find it—at the rope's end. I have seen more of this than you have, perhaps. Your boys will make a hero of him when he comes back."

"I wish they may, for at present they threaten him with a ducking. I fancy they got that idea from one of the Ironhand's stories."

"Ah! that strange fellow has attracted you as he did me."

"He has—and my heart aches when I think of him."

"Why so, Davie?"

"Because he might be made something great—and yet any evil influence might just be his ruin."

"Have you any idea who and what his parents are?"

"From what Bruce has told me, and what he has himself mentioned, I fear his father was one of the many instances of 'going to the dogs'—unless, which is quite possible, his mind was disordered, and he morbidly accused himself of deeds he had never done. His son's evidence seems to point that way, but he is very chary of his confidence, and it will not do to press for it."

"What is his own amount of capacity?"

"He is as full of intellect as a New World forest of vegetation, and, of course, all is wild and tangled. I tried a little chopping and hewing to let in light and air, but in so short a time could not hope to do much."

"Well, Nelson seems to have fraternised with him, from a letter I had yesterday; but he is puzzled, as we are. He says that the ladies, who are the best judges in these cases, seem to ignore Martin's servantship altogether, and that he is quite at his ease in their society: unless he begins to think about it, when he stiffens himself directly."

"Anything disturbed him at Lowlevels yet?"

"Nelson adds, in a postscript, that he is in hopes of tracing the old mystery by his help; but that another has come up, which has rather startled him, and may, perhaps, be connected with the first. It is a strange business altogether, but I don't like the idea of Bruce going away with his wife quite alone."

"Nor I, but you will not persuade him that there is any cause for fear. He does not know the meaning of the word."

"I trust he may never learn it—as poor Frank Nelson did. Look here, Davie—I must have a few days' holiday soon—what do you say to our running down together to this modern Udolpho, and seeing what our united wisdom can discover?"

It sounded very tempting, and David promised to consider the matter. While they were still talking it over, Joel Treherne arrived with a message, and was at once called into their council, and made acquainted with what they knew. He shook his head when he heard

about the stage helmet; it certainly seemed to confirm one of his suspicions; but when Lucy had named the subject to her friends, they were so indignant and offended, she had some difficulty in avoiding a great quarrel. "And to be sure," added he, "there was no proof against them: they owned they had played us a trick, but only out of good humour. I've a notion, sir, that Wily Wilkins got a twist of his arm that night, which will keep him out of the way for a while. I seemed to feel him shrink up into nothing in my hand."

"And these friends of Lucy's knew nothing about him?"

"Never heard of his name. They knew Mr. Jones, they said, who mended clocks and jewellery; but, as to anything else, they were ready to fly at her for hinting at it. She doesn't think Caterina will ever be the same to her again."

"I should be sorry that Lucy lost a friend: if she really is one."

"So should I, sir: and I wanted to ask Mr. Philip Forrest something about that house where sick girls can have a breath of sea air. Lucy and me have been talking about the poor maid, Caterina's sister—and we'd stand the expense and welcome, if by-and-by she could be got down here for the little bit of a change that she was pining for."

"All right, Joel; I'll let you know when there is a vacancy."

"Thank you, sir; there's no great hurry, for she is in full work now as a fairy, and can't be spared—not to get well, that is. I suppose they'll give her a holiday to die in, poor maid."

"Is she so ill?"

"Breathing red fire and gas, night after night, is just poison to her, they say, and affects her brain, so that she fancies all sorts of strange things. And Lucy takes it to heart, and I promised to do what I could."

The brothers applauded his kindness, and made a note of the case, that David might find some way of interesting the proprietor of the theatre; who might not, after all, be to blame. With this Joel went back to comfort Lucy.

His nearest way lay past the house in which Miss Ford and her brother had apartments; Burlington Ford, as he went by, was standing on the steps, talking to a smart, trim figure, in a dress between uniform and livery, carrying in his hand a cap with a gold band, and wearing a courier's pouch. They were arranging plans, by what he overheard, for a tour, and Mr. Ford was giving orders about some boxes that were to be ready by a certain day, and which the courier, as he seemed to be, was to take under his charge. The accent of the latter was foreign, though he spoke English well. As Joel had understood that the brother and sister were to meet his master abroad, this caused him no surprise, and he was passing on, after touching his hat, when Burlington called out, "Time nearly up, Joel?"

The courier, whose back had been towards the road, started as if

he had been struck, and looked after the tall Cornishman, who had only returned the greeting with a rather sheepish bow.

"If you please, sir, does Mr. Bruce's servant travel with him?"

"No; Mr. Bruce and his bride start alone."

The man drew a long breath, as if relieved, and asked nothing more.

The last evening came. The sisters, who had been so little separated in their lives that they had never realised what separation meant, were busy over some final arrangements, which helped them to forget that it was near: and Gabriel, wearied with the exertions of the day, was reclining in an easy chair, with his friend Mr. Herbert and Hartley Carroll on either side. The conversation, which had been lively enough at dinner, had sunk into silence, and even Hartley was thoughtful and grave. He was quite aware that Mr. Herbert had strongly objected to Gabriel's placing so much of his fortune in his hands, and at that moment he was half inclined to regret that he had accepted it. To be sure, he had done nothing underhand; Bruce had seen and judged for himself, and, as he told David Forrest, ran no risk that the firm did not share; but the dear old fellow had been so generous, so trusting in the way he did it—not ignoring possibilities of disaster, but taking his chance for the sake of giving one—if he did bring him to ruin, what on earth should he do? What hole would be mean enough for him to creep into?

"Bruce!" he said, so suddenly that both his companions started, "if I don't pay you ten per cent. in ten years, I'll make an appointment myself, and go out to seek my fortune as you did."

"Don't do that," said Gabriel, gently.

"Why not? Your story is the most encouraging that ever was told. You have won all you tried for—what more would you have?"

"Peace to enjoy it—and that I am never to have."

"You are tired, old fellow; I never saw you hipped before."

"You never saw me so near the summit of happiness; but the fact of reaching the top implies looking down at the bottom. I suppose it is that which makes me feel to-night as if the turn of the tide were against me, and those hounds, who are always on our trail, would get at our throats at last. And I have been selfish enough to draw that angel into the danger! God in His mercy watch over her!"

"Bruce, you are exciting yourself—we shall have you laid up if you do not keep quiet. What danger can there be for Edith, so long as you are safe?"

"I cannot explain—but I am sure it is there. You will laugh when I tell you—I could laugh myself—that this afternoon, as I was watching the passengers go on board the steamer, I heard a voice behind me that brought back, all in a moment, the scene in the railway carriage. I seemed to be there—to hear the sound—to feel the crash: as I almost feel it now."

"Did you see anybody you knew?"

"No; the crowd was too great."
"But the voice ——?"
"Was that of the man who struck me."

CHAPTER XXIII.

MYRA STRAHAN LEARNS A NEW WAY OF WINNING GOLD.

The parish of Level Bridge had several outlying hamlets; with cottages in secluded nooks, which it required some local knowledge to find out. In her younger days, Mrs. Salisbury had been familiar with them all, and had braved many a snow-storm, many a sultry sun, to visit the sick and aged, or look up the refractory. Her influence had been a strong one in its time; it had declined with her capacity for active work; but in the traditions of the elder generation Madam was still an authority to be quoted with respect—and even, in extreme cases, to be appealed to. Over a few of her old acquaintances the lady still kept a tender watch; and Alice Kerr received more than one lesson in rural visiting, by accompanying her on some of these errands. In return, she told all she knew, and a good deal she had only heard, about the mission work in St. Edmund's; and though some of the doings almost took Madam's breath away, she listened with unfeigned interest, and owned, with a somewhat rare humility, that many things were thought of now which were overlooked in her youth, and which she was now too old to learn.

It was the more refreshing to converse with a frank, intelligent girl like Alice Kerr in these matters, that Myra openly repudiated them. She did not like poor people, except when they were working to please her; and that there could be any pleasure in giving was far beyond her comprehension. Alice had won her respect by earning gold for herself, as Martin had by finding it; but it was in vain to try and lure her into the pleasant paths of unselfish benevolence—in vain to tell her stories of poor starving children, without clothes or fire, in hopes that her sympathies might be reached through her imagination. She would listen eagerly, enjoy all the melancholy details, and wait for the catastrophe, as if it had been that of Little Red Riding Hood; but the arrival of kind ladies with blankets and soup always seemed, like the modern version of the woodcutters, to spoil the story. And any attempt to draw out the moral made her sulky at once.

Her portrait had been often delayed by her fits of indisposition; she had taken a great liking to Alice Kerr, and would often mind a word from her sooner than one from her grandmother; but there were days when she could not keep still five minutes together, and then there was nothing for it but to follow her about the house, and humour her restlessness by finding it an object. Alice's school experience was invaluable at such times; she had too often had to

keep a juvenile class contented on small means, not to be fertile in expedients for creating cheap happiness; and when everything else failed, had one grand argument in favour of turning over books, rummaging drawers, or ransacking dusty lumber-rooms. They might find a treasure somewhere—who could tell? Bank-notes had been hidden in old volumes—money might have been dropped in odd corners—she herself had once found a franc in the pocket of an old dress which she had quite forgotten, and with it she bought a ribbon, and made up a bow which one of the day boarders bought for two francs. Imagine, if that sort of thing had gone on, what a fortune she would have made! Myra assented eagerly, and the very next day made Alice, much against her will, accompany her to the top of the house, where a large attic was given up to the stowage of unused furniture and other articles. Here, as she told in a mysterious whisper, she had once picked up an old thimble which turned out to be real gold, and for which her papa sent her a sovereign from London. Who could say how many more might be lying about somewhere? Alice could not answer the question; and, though grudging the lights and shadows she was losing, good-humouredly indulged the poor child's whim—her own curiosity being repaid by finding several dusty paintings, some with tarnished frames, and others not framed at all. Among these last was an unfinished figure of a young girl carrying a tray, as if in imitation of the famous "Belle Chocolatière," and something in the face interested her, she knew not why.

"Who is this, Myra—do you know?" she asked, after pondering over it in silence.

"That?" said Myra, looking up from an old box she was diligently examining. "Oh, she was a thief. She robbed grandmamma of one of her jewels."

"What, a diamond?"

"I suppose so. It must have been worth a great deal of money, for grandmamma can't bear to speak of it. I wish I knew where it was, because it would be mine, you know."

"What became of the thief, my dear?"

"I don't know, and I don't care. It doesn't much signify; she was only a servant—quite a poor person."

"Only!" thought Alice, as her mind flew back to the dingy London parish, where she had heard the poor estimated at so different a value. "I wonder," she said presently, "if I might sketch the face?"

"Why? Do you think you could make some money with it?"

"I might, if it were worked up into a good picture."

"Then if you will give me something in gold, *I* will give you leave to copy it, for everything here is mine," said Myra, so decidedly that Alice supposed it must be true. She readily agreed to the terms, provided Myra could wait till the money was made; and then had no scruples in securing two or three clever studies of the nameless

thief, whose features had singularly taken her fancy. Of course she intended naming the subject to Mrs. Salisbury; but being fully occupied all the rest of the day, it escaped her memory for the time.

That evening, some intimate friends of her hostess, who were staying at the Rectory, came in to tea; and Alice Kerr was asked, as a favour, to show them some of her sketches. She never objected to this, being aware that they were often superior to her more finished works; and one of the visitors being a sufficiently good judge to make her criticisms worth having, she was listening to her remarks with anxious interest, when the other, an elderly lady, who had hitherto said but little on the subject, happening to look over her sister's shoulder, suddenly exclaimed, "My dear! I have seen that face before. Dear me, how wonderfully like ——"

There was an awkward pause. The younger sister glanced inquiringly at Alice, who reddened, and began to stammer an explanation: which Myra's decided tones cut short.

"*I* gave her leave to copy the face. That is the thief who stole the jewel."

Mrs. Salisbury, who had not been attending to what was going on, turned quickly round, with an expression in her face that Alice never forgot. "What are you speaking of?" she asked, and without waiting for an answer, held out her hand for the sketch-book. It was given to her in silence, but Alice noted that the elder visitor moved quietly to her friend's side and laid her hand on her shoulder. She herself, feeling guilty of she knew not what, except that it was a blunder, tried to apologise, but could not get out the words, and nobody seemed to heed the attempt. After a long and silent examination of the studies, Mrs. Salisbury calmly observed that Miss Kerr excelled in those bold outlines, and ought to be a mistress of portrait painting in time. She handed back the sketch-book to her friend, and nothing more was said; the visitors talked of other matters, and Alice's cheeks had time to regain their natural tint and temperature.

That something was wrong she was sure, but evidently she was not to be enlightened; though she could not help fancying, from the look one of the ladies gave her, that she was more than half inclined to be communicative. Mrs. Salisbury, however, gave them no opportunity; and, after their departure, retired so early that Alice could not find a moment for the apology she felt to be due. So all she could do was to confide in Grace, and beg her to find out the true facts of the story.

Grace shook her head. "It seems to me, Miss Kerr, almost a sin to keep jewels like that in a house where there is no gentleman. Many is the poor soul that has been lost just because people would put temptation in the way; and Madam has had more than one fright about her diamonds already. It frightens me whenever I see that box opened. I shall be right thankful when we've done with it, and are safe out of the house."

It was seldom that Grace spoke so energetically, and Alice was rather amused by her want of courage. But the words came back to her mind the next day under circumstances that rather tried her own.

She was at work, as usual, in the library. Myra was in better spirits, her papa having promised that her nugget should be made into a trinket for her watch-chain—and she was calculating how long it would take, and wondering when she should find another. The day had been very close, and the window had been opened, as it would have been much oftener if it had not been for Myra's health. Alice had risen, from a sense of duty, to shut it again, when she heard steps on the gravel below. It was so seldom anyone came that way that she looked out to see who it was, and then heard a sound which made her start. But the next moment she felt half ashamed of having done so—it seemed so ridiculous and so unlikely! She listened again, straining her ears to the utmost, and after a few moments of doubt was convinced that the same sound was repeated. A nervous tremor ran through her frame—it was impossible to go on drawing.

"Myra," she said, suddenly, laying down her pencil, "when are you going to show me how to dig for gold?"

"Never; it would take away my luck," said Myra, gravely.

"Not at all, if we tried in a fresh place. If only we had Mr. Martin here, he would tell us all about it."

"I'll send Richard to fetch him—or suppose I go myself? Then he'd be sure to come."

Alice had heard Mrs. Salisbury more than once regret her granddaughter's reluctance to take exercise, and therefore did not hesitate to encourage the notion. As soon as the child had left the room she rang the bell twice—the appointed signal for Grace Pyne.

"Oh, Grace!" she exclaimed, as her attendant entered, "I laughed at you last night, and I am as bad as you to-day. Come and help me to get these precious things under lock and key; and it is the last time I will be left in charge of them. That I declare."

"What is the matter, Miss Kerr?"

"Matter? Some one is prowling round the house, and must have seen them if he looked in; that's the matter. Unless there are two men in the world who cough exactly in the same odd way, it is the person I saw in France, and heard in the mission chapel."

Grace caught hold of the table. "You heard him, you say, Miss Kerr?"

"Yes, near the window. He is gone now, of course. I said nothing to Miss Strahan, but she is going to ask Martin to call, and I shall ask him if I ought to caution Mrs. Salisbury."

Grace Pyne made no further remark. She assisted in restoring the room to its usual state, and then hurried to her chamber, seized bonnet and shawl, and went out in quest of the mysterious sound.

The first person she met was old Richard, very cross at being disturbed at his potting, very angry with Miss Strahan for going out, and still more so with his mistress for having left her at home. On being asked if he had seen anyone about the premises, he replied that he saw too many to please him every day of his life; he had been telling a London constable (who had hurt himself on the line) that they wanted more police in the country, to keep idlers out of kitchen and larder. Where was he gone? Oh, down the nut walk—looking for nuts, may be—never was a cockney yet as knew one month from another. And, refreshed by this sarcasm at the querist's expense, Richard went off to the stable, leaving Grace to do as she pleased. At first she hesitated; a London police officer could have nothing to do with her; but the ever-present fear prevailed, and with a beating heart she turned into the nut walk: a cool and pleasant retreat in summer, but at this early season somewhat damp and chill. At every step she glanced eagerly on either side; but nothing appeared. The walk, which was straight and narrow, terminated in a summer house, with a fountain before it, and behind it a gate leading into the wood. On that gate leaned a man, with his hand in a sling, apparently waiting her approach.

It was no longer Mr. Jones—hair, eyebrows, complexion, dress, were all different, and his eyes were hidden by blue spectacles; but when he took these off, their first glance at her was enough. He held out his left hand, and she could not but clasp it in both hers, even while she whispered, "Oh, why are you come here—and like this?"

"To show you what a hold you have on my heart, dear girl. A poor fellow has no chance; if you will run away he must come after you, even with only one hand to use, and think himself lucky he has both his legs to march with."

"Your hand is hurt—you told the old man it was on the railway—that was not true," said Grace, too much agitated to respond to the compliment.

He smiled sarcastically. "No, my dear, it was not; but we don't tell everybody our family matters. I may tell *you* that it was done by a sort of relation, who shook hands with me just a bit too hard. I owe him one for it, which I'll pay some fine day."

"It was you, then, that Joel caught in Mr. Bruce's room?"

"Well—and what of that, Grace? Why was I there, do you think?"

"Oh, don't ask me—don't make me say—it is so dreadful to me! What could you be doing there that was right for an honest man?"

"What did I tell you from the first? Were you not to trust me, and ask no questions? What I was doing then is just what I am doing now—trying to clear my own name, and set wrong right. That's my errand, and I mean to carry it through, no matter what people think. I did hope my own brave girl would stick to me

through it all, and lend me a hand when I wanted it; but she's too afraid of the gentlefolks and the gossips, and she wouldn't even dip her handkerchief in the cold water to comfort this aching arm of mine, which drives me nearly mad. There, never mind—I'll get the old woman at home to do it," he went on, turning away as if to depart. But Grace stood between him and the gate, and made him sit down on a bench while she loosened his bandage.

"Ah," she said, as she bathed his wrist with water, and tied her handkerchief round it, "if the aching of my heart could cure your hand, Darch, you wouldn't be troubled with it long. It's no peace or rest I get night or day with thinking of you—and being obliged to misdoubt you, when I long to trust. Though you tell it me yourself, I can hardly bear to believe it—did you set the place on fire?"

He shook his head.

"But you were there, in that dress, so you must have known. Oh, Darch, how can a name be cleared by such doings as these?"

"Wait till they succeed—all depends on that. I am fighting for us both; and when all is fairly won, you will own you did me wrong. But if you are tired of it, you've but to go to the nearest magistrate and give information. I promise you I shan't run away."

"Darch, tell me the plain truth—had you anything to do with that attack on Mr. Bruce?"

"No. I never mean to hurt a hair of his head—unless I am forced in self-defence. He does not deserve much consideration from me, but, for your sake, I'll forget all that. You'd better not put questions that you might have to answer some day yourself."

"Then what are you hunting him for? You are the man they call Wily Wilkins, are you not?"

"Yes, I am; and they shall find I deserve the name before they've done with me; but wily does not stand for wicked, Grace. Don't you be frightened; I am full of tricks and dodges to carry my point, but I'm not so black as I'm painted; and for everything I'm doing now I've got a gentleman, looked up to and respected, to back me up. What do you say to that?"

"I can't understand it—I can't make you out. I only know that if you were getting an honest living by the hardest of hard work, I could bless God for his mercy, and pray for a blessing on what you did; but while you go on as you are doing now, all I can beg of Him, night and day, is that He will stand in the way before you and turn you back!"

She turned from him as she spoke and hurried home as if she could trust herself no further. He watched her disappearing figure till he could see it no more, and then slowly rose to depart in the opposite direction; a vague superstitious dread having seized him at her last words.

"The luck does somehow go against us; I can't think how, unless it is her doing. If that's all she can do for a fellow with her

prayers, he'd as lief she let him alone : aye, and she'll have to, if it goes on. If I thought—— "

Here his musings were cut short by an approaching step from the wood, and Mrs. Salisbury opened the gate.

His hat was instantly in his hand, and his civil speeches were ready to explain his presence. He had not meant to intrude, but had missed his way, and felt a little faint from the pain of his accident. Mrs. Salisbury accepted the apology, and offered him refreshment, but this he gratefully declined. The lady's goodness was talked of in all the neighbourhood, and now he could bear witness to the fact. He wished he might ever have the opportunity of doing her a service. And, with another low bow, he was passing on, when she asked him where he was lodging.

"At a cottage belonging to an old woman—one of the oldest I ever saw, ma'am—gives one an idea how healthy your climate must be. The name is Cheveril, I think. She has other lodgers besides me."

"Ah, indeed! Yes, I know Mrs. Cheveril, and her cottage. That is your nearest way, sir."

And with a civil bow of dismissal she moved on, her brow clouded, and her head slightly depressed, as if painful recollections had been stirred within. So absorbed became she in her thoughts that the time passed unheeded ; and it was not till a sense of oppression in the atmosphere recalled her grand-daughter to her recollection—Myra being always terrified by a thunderstorm—that she at last returned to the house. On entering the library she was surprised to find the drawing materials put away, and Alice enjoying a book ; nor did the explanation that Myra was gone out for a drive at all mend the matter.

"She had her walk this morning, and decided not to go out again. The weather is changing, and I am afraid we are going to have a storm. What put this into her head? "

"I am afraid I did," said Alice, "but I could not think of anything else, and I wanted to lock up the diamonds. Here is the key. I really think now we can finish the picture without them."

Mrs. Salisbury took the key, but still looked dissatisfied.

"Why were you so anxious to-day, may I ask? "

Alice explained. Adding, with a blush : "After what I had heard of your being robbed once before, I really felt frightened, and could not go on drawing. I am very sorry if I have vexed you. I wanted to say so last night."

Mrs. Salisbury sighed, but more in sadness than displeasure. "You meant no harm, my dear, and I thank you for your precaution. It is true I was robbed once—and heavily. But that has been long forgiven, and the blame was not all on one side—the temptation was great, and ought not to have been there. You must not quite believe all poor Myra tells you."

"I see I was wrong to copy the picture without your leave. Shall I tear it out of my book?"

"No, no—only be tender in your use of it. Spare the dead: at least, till you know more. Some day I may be able to tell it you; I cannot now." She paused to recover her voice, and then walked to the window. "You heard the step and the peculiar cough just here? I do not think we need be uneasy. I met the person who alarmed you—I am much more anxious about that dear child. There! did you see that flash? Oh, if she would but come home!"

But all her wishes, and all Alice's remorse for her contrivance, were futile at present. The storm, which had been gathering its strength all day, was now breaking upon them with a fury not very usual so early in the year, and every crash and blaze made the young artist so miserable that her hostess's courtesy compelled her to disguise her own sensations. She assured her penitent guest that Richard set about equal value on his young lady, Punch, and his precious self; and as they had not returned before the storm began, it was morally certain they were all taking shelter. And so it proved. But it seemed a very long time to both before the listened-for wheels were heard, and Myra made her appearance, safe and sound, and in excellent spirits, full of some new idea almost too big for utterance.

They had just reached Lowlevels, meaning to leave a message only, when the clouds grew so black that Richard made her get out and go into the house, while he put up the carriage. Mr. Martin was very kind and amusing, gave her brown bread and cream, and made Settler show off all the funny tricks he had taught him. But, best of all, he had taught her something too. He and Bob Medland had been playing a game, and when the lightning began to flash, and she cried, he had shut all the shutters, lighted the candles, and showed her how they did it, and then played with her himself, and she won this—showing a gold seven-shilling piece, which he said he had had for years. It was much nicer than digging, wasn't it? You could do it indoors, whenever you liked, without dirtying your hands, and Martin said that people sometimes won thousands of pounds in that way."

"And did he not say they sometimes lost all they had?" asked her grandmother, prudently refraining from any display of feeling on the subject, which would only stamp it deeper on the infirm brain.

"No, he did not say anything about losing."

"But somebody must lose if the other is to win."

"Then I hope I shall always be the other. I asked Richard about it, and he said I had better ask my papa. So I shall, directly. He will send me down some pretty cards and counters; and you will play with me, Miss Kerr, won't you? Martin is coming to-morrow, and he'll show you how."

They promised whatever she wished—there was nothing else to be done; but the misery in the poor grandmother's face that evening

made Alice's heart ache. What could Martin have been thinking of—and, still worse, what could he himself be about, that his leisure should be thus employed?

CHAPTER XXIV.

HOW SIR JESSE CRITICISED THE PICTURE.

Mrs. Carroll to Alice Kerr.

"WELL, my dear Alice, the great event is over, and I have just returned from seeing the steamer depart which conveys the happy pair across the Channel. After sundry changes of purpose, they decided on France, and I trust the sea of to-day may be a good omen for their married life. It was a very odd wedding; we all looked at and thought much more about the bridegroom than the bride; and the couple themselves seemed to think more of the service than of themselves or each other. They might have been two of old Bunyan's pilgrims, setting out on their journey, rather than a gentleman and a lady in easy circumstances, who may do pretty much as they please, Sundays and working-days. In this case, Christiana is quite as ready as her husband, and I wouldn't be the giant in her way that laid a finger on Gabriel. Meek and peaceable as I am myself, I think even I could fight for that dear fellow; and I could tell you why, but I won't. I only know that I mean, by hook or by crook, to get that sketch of him from Helen Ford, which you stole first, and she afterwards. Talking of Helen Ford, I wonder whether you have yet heard the last news. If you have heard nothing, be discreet; but it cannot be a secret long to those around you, for everybody here knows that she is to be the second Lady Strahan. They were very friendly about you, offering to take you with them, to meet the Bruces in Paris, or elsewhere; but of course you know that your head-quarters are with us, whenever you are not specially engaged. I shall want comforting, as I am to lose my dear old nurse, who only waits for the second wedding to-morrow before starting for Lowlevels, where, I suppose, Grace Pyne will join her, to get all ready. We go home to-morrow, as Hartley has a great deal to do—and I almost think he means to do it."

[*Finished by Hartley Carroll, two days later.*]

"Almost, indeed! I have not only to do my own work, but to finish hers. Here we are in London, and this letter has never been sent. Now I can tell you for your comfort that your great patron is going down to see how you are getting on, and perhaps to sit to you himself. How I envy you!"

Letters were not delivered at Highlevels till after breakfast, and Alice Kerr always read hers in the library. She was still in all the flutter of excitement caused by the thought of being again with

Gabriel and Edith, as well as of the startling news both her correspondents conveyed, when Mrs. Salisbury came in, also with a letter in her hand.

"It is as well our picture is finished, Miss Kerr, for Sir Jesse writes that he will be with us this evening."

"Yes, I heard he was coming," stammered Alice.

"You did? And you may have heard, too, that some other friends of yours are going abroad soon, and hope to carry you away with them."

"Miss Ford is no particular friend of mine—only of Edith and Clare."

"Allow me to observe that to be their friend is a recommendation in itself. Is she at all like Mrs. Bruce?"

"Like Edith? As unlike as fog is to sunshine. Where Edith would say or do something to help you on, Miss Ford would just throw you back. She doesn't seem to me to believe in or care about anything."

"You are too young to judge, my dear, how little people's words sometimes really mean on such subjects. I trust you are mistaken."

"If she doesn't mean it she shouldn't say it; but I do not want to speak against her. She was very good-natured to me, and Edith loves her too. I beg your pardon for saying what I did."

Mrs. Salisbury smiled a little bitterly. She saw that the news was no secret, which had come like a thunderclap to herself.

"I may depend on your discretion, Miss Kerr," she said, hurriedly, "not to mention the lady's name to Myra at present. All that is right for her to know her father will tell her. We must try and keep her in good spirits against his arrival. I shall miss your help sadly. If all Mrs. Bruce's friends are as amiable ——"

She could not finish her sentence, but bending over her young guest she kissed her forehead; and left her so touched and gratified that she could have undertaken anything, however tiresome, to do her a pleasure.

Certainly it required some such motive to be indulgent to Myra's last fancy, and sit down on a bright warm morning to play odd and even for postage-stamps, the highest stake which Mrs. Salisbury would allow, and of which her grand-daughter had already accumulated a handsome store. The more distressed the elder lady looked at the weird spectacle, the more the younger tried to appear as though she liked it; and, indeed, Myra decidedly preferred Alice's companionship to that of anyone else. She often said that Alice must stay with her altogether; and when she was told her papa was expected, nodded her head significantly, intimating that he would settle it all in a minute.

"I am always lucky in playing with you: and pence, papa says, grow into pounds in time—don't they, Miss Kerr? You don't mind losing your stamps, do you?"

Alice minded nothing, with the bright prospect now before her of her holiday trip—so unlike her old experiences of Continental journeying—the society of Gabriel and Edith, and the life she was to lead with them afterwards. If only her picture gave satisfaction! But she was artist enough to feel, now it was finished, that it might have been much better done; yet if she touched it again she should probably spoil it altogether. Much would depend on her patron's humour; and a man who could admire Edith, as she was sure he did, and then marry Miss Ford, must have such peculiar ideas that you could not foretell what he would say or think.

Their sixth game was just over, and Alice was smothering an immense yawn, when relief appeared in the announcement of a visit from Martin, who had brought a note for Miss Kerr. Myra jumped up in delight, desired he might be admitted directly, and seized on him as he entered to tell him her great news. Her papa was coming to dinner, and would play with her himself—for gold. Would Martin show her how to manage so that she was sure to win?

"If I lost any of my gold, I don't know what I should do, you know."

"It is awkward, my little lady," said he, with the gentle compassion he always showed in speaking to her, "but those who play must learn to lose in their turn."

"Do *you* ever lose when you play?"

"Indeed I do. To tell you the truth, I have nearly made up my mind that I can't afford to play any more."

"I am so glad," murmured Alice, looking up from her note, and fixing her eyes on his.

"Glad that I have been losing?"

"Yes, if it stops you in time. Don't be angry, but I have seen men so miserable over their cards, I do wish you would let them alone."

"You care about my being miserable?"

"Did you not care when I was so? Few people have been more wretched than I felt for those few minutes, before you came to my help. I should be most ungrateful if I forgot it."

He made her a little bow, but remained silent. Myra, who was collecting the cards together, looked at them both with a puzzled expression, as if she did not quite take in what they were saying. She was still brooding over the idea that playing for gold was expensive.

"I will write a line to Mrs. Ellis," said Alice, turning to the other table, "if you will kindly take charge of it."

She sat down to write, and he came behind her chair, and after a pause began in a low tone to excuse his having put the cards into the poor child's head. She seemed so terrified by the storm, he could think of nothing else to amuse her; and it had completely distracted her attention.

"And her head ever since," said Alice, petulantly; "but you meant

it for the best. I was only dismayed to hear that the cards were there. I hate the very sight of them!"

"You are quite right—at this moment I feel that I do. But their purpose is answered, and I shall not want them any more."

Alice looked up inquiringly. It was curious, as she thought afterwards, how completely they seemed to understand each other, and to feel that each deserved confidence—but it came so naturally that they were intimate before they were aware. In reply to her look, he informed her that he had expected Medland would be used as a tool, and had humoured him as an experiment. He was satisfied now that he received suggestions from outside.

"He tried hard to make me play at first, by flattering hints about my luck; and at last I made out that some one had told him of my skill at cards. Now I had not touched one since I came to Europe, so that could only have reached him through somebody who knew me before. I let him think I was taken in; and his play has suddenly become so artful, I know he has been taught a trick or two, and I mean to learn where."

"Then I was not wrong. It was Wily Wilkins I heard!"

"When? Where?"

Alice explained: the more easily that Myra, hearing her grandmother pass, had just run out of the room. Martin listened with keen interest, and decidedly took her view of the matter.

"Your quick wit is a treasure to us," he said. "That is the man Bob talked of, and who is using him for his own ends. If he be our enemy, all right; so long as he is here the captain is safe, and Joel will come soon to strengthen the garrison."

"You shall have Grace Pyne at once. I have told Mrs. Ellis that I do not want a maid, and if Mrs. Salisbury approves, she can go to-morrow."

They stayed a little while after this had been settled, talking over their absent friends, and comparing accounts of the wedding, till Myra's return. A thought struck Martin, and he met her with an air of mystery which arrested her at once.

"Come, my little lady," he said, "I am going to show you something better than a game—something that everybody cannot do, though some people have made money by it. Lend me those cards."

He proceeded to show her one or two simple conjuring tricks, familiar to all who have seen such exhibitions, but new to Myra; who, as he expected, wanted to learn how they were done. What surprised him, however, was the wonderful aptitude she displayed for acquiring the art, as if legerdemain had been her natural gift; he could not help remarking that she would have been a fortune to her father if his profession had been that of Houdin.

"I'll tell him what you say," cried Myra, triumphantly. And after his departure she went on practising her new art, till Alice could not

refrain from sketching her, as she sat, for a picture to be called "The Juggler's Child."

It did not escape her notice that her kind hostess was in a state of unwonted restlessness and excitement, wandering from room to room, and ringing the bell much oftener than was necessary. The Rector and Dr. Nelson had been invited to meet Sir Jesse: and Alice persuaded Mrs. Salisbury to let her sit with Myra during dinner and keep her amused—an offer which, though it jarred on the good lady's sense of hospitality, excited her warm gratitude.

"If I can ever do you a service, I will, my dear, you may depend upon it," she said more than once; and Alice felt sure she meant what she said, though she did not know how soon it would be tested.

Sir Jesse came. To all appearance his mother-in-law had recovered her quiet dignity, and his reception was all that could be required on either side. Alice kept the child happy while they were at dinner, with an interminable tale of treasure-finding, borrowed on the spur of the moment from sources of various kinds; and thus contrived to keep down her own private nervousness about the criticisms that would be made on her picture. Sir Jesse, she was told, had seen and commended it highly, but had something to say about it which he would himself explain. When he did come into the drawing-room with the other gentlemen, he was particularly courteous to Alice, thanked her for her goodness to his child, talked in the most friendly manner of their mutual acquaintance, Miss Ford, and then turned the general attention to her picture.

The two guests were ready with their commendations. The Canon was, as he said, no judge of art, but knew a likeness when he saw it; Dr. Nelson appreciated all the cleverness displayed, and good-naturedly held his tongue about the drawing; but neither was prepared for the critique of the great authority. He objected to the treatment of the jewels—in his opinion the reflected light should have been differently handled; and he was morally certain that if they could obtain a hint or two from a first-rate artist it would be of incalculable service to Miss Kerr. His object was to have the picture seen as soon as possible, so as to secure for her the advantage of the London season; but in these cases it was most important that her first piece should not be found with a defect which every critic would feel bound to notice. Of course, at that time of the year, every artist was either in London already, or rushing thither; and one whom he knew well, and who would be a sound authority on the doubtful point, would, he was sure, insist on seeing the model exactly as she sat.

"In that case," said Dr. Nelson, "there is nothing for it but to take her up to town with her likeness, diamonds and all."

"Ah!" said Sir Jesse, shaking his head, and suppressing a sigh, "but there is some one else to be considered: and it would, I fear, be asking her too much."

All eyes turned on Mrs. Salisbury, who did not, at first, appear to apprehend her son-in-law's meaning. He soon made it clear by addressing his daughter, asking her if she would not like to go to London, and see all the shops, and drive in the parks, and choose her own dresses for the summer? Then she must coax grandmamma to bring her up to him for a visit, and to bring the diamonds with her, that people might see if the picture were really like.

The blood mounted into Mrs. Salisbury's cheeks for a moment, as her grand-daughter turned to urge the request; and Alice, who read in her face the repugnance to comply, ventured to interpose, offering to paint the likeness over again, rather than give Mrs. Salisbury so much trouble. Sir Jesse smiled, and observed that would not be quite the same to him.

"But we will not press the subject now," he said, pleasantly; "these things take a little time to consider and arrange. Myra, my dear, you said you had something to show me. What is it?"

"I meant to show you a game," said Myra; "but Martin says you can't always win without cheating, so he taught me some tricks instead; and if you were a conjuror I should make your fortune. I should like to make your fortune, papa."

"Would you, my dear?" said he, caressing her more tenderly than usual, for it was the first time he had ever heard her wish to do anything for him at all.

"Yes—because it would all be mine, you know."

He pressed his stern lips together, and withdrew his hand from her hair. "Show me how you would make my fortune."

The child sprang up in a moment, and went through her little performance with a skill which the other gentlemen applauded good-humouredly, but which brought no smile to her father's face. He only observed, with marked emphasis, that her education seemed to be falling into good hands; and changed the subject by producing some little presents from London. Among these was a pretty gold locket, which he told her, with a significant smile, was a keepsake from a lady who was longing to see her. The child's curiosity being excited, he took her on his knee, and went on whispering such messages and explanations as he thought she could appreciate, and wound up by inquiring what she would say if she saw the kind giver of the locket she admired so much. Myra pondered a moment, then her eyes brightened with the happy thought: "I should say that I wanted a gold chain to wear with it!"

"Ah!" said he, a little disconcerted, but without losing his presence of mind, "that is just what she expected; and when your dear grandmamma brings you to London, the gold chain will be ready for you to put on."

He had clenched the matter now, for Myra had quite made up her mind, and when she wished her grandmother good-night, told her, point-blank, that she was going to have a new mamma, who would

give her beautiful presents; and when she went to London she was to have a new gold chain for her locket. Mrs. Salisbury did not contradict her, and her son-in-law tacitly accepted the victory, exerting himself for the rest of the evening to make an impression on his listeners with anecdotes of the art-world—of his own experience as a patron and connoisseur, and of the failure, from want of taking his advice, of more than one ambitious candidate for fame.

Dr. Nelson took an opportunity of sitting down in a quiet corner with his hostess, and expressing his fear that she was worried by the idea of the journey. She owned that she shrank from the exertion, and dreaded the effect on Myra, but that she hardly felt justified in opposing Sir Jesse's express desire. She could not help wishing now that the diamonds had been left out of the picture.

"To tell you the truth," said the doctor, with a sagacious nod, "I am very glad the diamonds are going to have London advice. Unless I am much mistaken some of them want it."

"My dear doctor!"

"Ah, you laughed at me before, when I hinted as much. But never mind; take them with you, by all means, and get them looked at by a first-rate jeweller. If he says they are all right, I will apologise, and (which is more difficult) own myself mistaken."

"It would be a serious matter if they were not, considering that they have been valued more than once, and have been under lock and key for years. But I begin to think they might be safer at a banker's, and doubt very much whether I shall bring them back—even if I convey them safely thither."

"You need have no fear of that, if report speaks truth—that you saved them once single-handed."

"I was younger then, and I could see my robber; but the thieves I dread are those whom I cannot see. I would have risked more than I did to save poor Cheveril."

"Cheveril? Was he any relation of the poor old woman, down in the Combe, where the Medlands are lodging?"

"He was her grandson. Have you seen her lately?"

"I was sent for to her this afternoon—she is sinking fast."

"Why did they not let me know? I will drive over to-morrow, and take her some wine."

"Then stay with her while she drinks it, for I would not trust my worthy tenants with a teaspoonful. If it had not been for Erasmus Martin, she might have died this afternoon. He sent Bob to fetch me, and I found him pouring broth and brandy down her throat to keep her alive."

"What, Bruce's Australian?" said Sir Jesse, who had come nearer to them than they were aware; "what mischief could he have been after, to take him there?"

"Why should he be after mischief, Sir Jesse?"

"Simply because he was brought up to it: a gambling, desperate

sort of fellow, whom I should not care to quarrel with in a dark lane. I hope you have not shown *him* your diamonds, my dear madam?"

Before Mrs. Salisbury could answer, Richard came in to say the doctor was wanted.

"Who is here, Richard?" asked he, concealing the reluctance with which he rose from his comfortable seat.

"It's a London constable, he calls himself, who is lodging at the Combe, with the Medlands, sir. He is staying here to recover from an accident, I believe."

"The same I saw here one day," said Mrs. Salisbury; "he seemed intelligent, but rather too smooth spoken, I thought. Dr. Nelson, if your gig is here, you will not mind taking a basket with you?"

She hurried out to collect a few comforts for the sick woman, while the gentlemen consulted together; the Canon deciding to accompany his friend, and Sir Jesse taking out his purse to contribute a trifle, observing she was an old acquaintance. He went into the hall with them to hear the last report of the messenger; and the latter, when summoned, did not perceive him at first. While they were waiting for Mrs. Salisbury's basket, the Canon asked him about a robbery lately committed on the line, and if it were true that there was a new trick by which a dressing-box had been spirited away under the very eyes of the owners, by dropping over it a leather case, apparently strapped and directed. He believed it was true that the thing had been done, but not so easily as people thought.

"No," said Sir Jesse, "those tricks require real cleverness, and are generally highly paid."

The man turned at the sound of his voice, and was about to speak, but was suddenly seized with a fit of coughing, and retreated to recover himself. Dr. Nelson, following to see if he could relieve him, found Bilson, Myra's maid, administering a cup of milk, which she explained did him more good than anything.

"Oh, you know him, do you? Well, if he will call on me to-morrow, I'll see what I can do for his cough. It is enough to tear him to pieces. Here comes the basket. Now my dear sir, we must be off."

As they drove away on their errand of mercy, Sir Jesse walked to the hall door, and looked out with a longing gaze. "It is a fine night," he observed; "I'll take a turn myself before going to bed."

He lighted a cigar, and strolled along the gravel walk until he detected the figure of the disabled constable coming slowly round from the back entrance. In a few strides he was by his side.

"Darch Williams, you have failed me so far, but I will try you once more. The tide of luck is turning; and I am going to give you such a chance as may never occur again."

(To be continued.)

A DAY IN BRIAR WOOD.

THAT day, and its events, can never go out of my memory. There are epochs in life that lie upon the heart for ever, marking the past like stones placed for retrospect. They may be of pleasure, or they may be of pain; but there they are, in that great store-field locked up within us, to be recalled at will as long as life shall last.

It was in August, and one of the hottest days of that hot month. A brilliant day: the sun shining with never a cloud to soften it, the sky intensely blue. Just the day for a picnic, provided you had shade.

Shade we had. Briar Wood abounds in it. For the towering trees are dark, and their foliage thick. Here and there the wood opens, and you come upon the sweetest little bits of meadow-land scenery that a painter's eye could desire. Patches of green glade smooth enough for fairy revels; undulating banks draped with ferns and fragrant with sweet wild flowers; dells dark and dim to roam in and fancy yourself out of the world.

Briar Wood belonged to Sir John Whitney. It was of a good length but narrow, terminating at one end in the entangled coppice which we had dashed through that long-past day when we played at hare and hounds; and poor Charles Van Rheyn had died, in that same coppice, of the running. The other and best end, up where these lonely glades lie sheltered, extends itself nearly to the lands pertaining to Vale Farm—if you have not forgotten that place. The wood was a rare resort for poachers and gipsies, as well as picnic parties, and every now and again Sir John would declare that it should be rooted up.

We were staying at Whitney Hall. Miss Deveen was there on a visit (Cattledon included, of course), and Sir John wrote over to invite us for a few days to meet her: the Squire and Mrs. Todhetley, I and Tod. And, there we were, enjoying ourselves like anything.

It was Sir John himself who proposed the picnic. He called it a gipsy-party: indeed, the word "picnic" had hardly come in then. The weather was so hot indoors that Sir John thought it might be an agreeable change to live a day in the open air; and lie in the shade and look up at the blue sky through the flickering trees. So the cook was told to provide fowls and ham and pigeon pies, with apple puffs, salads, and creams.

"The large carriage and the four-wheeled chaise shall take the ladies," observed Sir John, "and I daresay they can make room for me and the Squire amidst them; it's a short distance, and we shan't mind a little crowding. You young men can walk."

So it was ordained. The carriages started, and we after them, William and Henry Whitney disputing as to which was the best route to take: Bill holding out for that by Goose Brook, Harry for that by the river. It ended in our dividing: I went with Bill his way; the rest of the young Whitneys and Tod the other, with Featherston's nephew; an overgrown young giant of seventeen, about six feet, who had been told he might come.

Barring the heat, it was a glorious walk; just as it was a glorious day. Passing Goose Brook (a little stream meandering through the trees, with a rustic bridge across it: though why it should hold that name I never knew) we soon came to the coppice end of the wood.

"Now," said Bill to me, "shall we plunge into the wood at once, and so onwards right through it; or skirt round by the Granary?"

"The wood will be the shadiest."

"And pleasantest. I'm not at all sure, though, Johnny, that I shan't lose my way in it. It has all kinds of bewildering tricks and turnings."

"Never mind if you do. We can find it again."

"We should have been safe to meet some of those Leonards had we gone by the Granary," observed Bill, as we turned into the wood, where just at present the trees were thin, "and they might have been wanting to join us, pushing fellows that they are! I don't like them."

"Who are the Leonards? Who were they before they came here?"

"Old Leonard made a mint of money in India, and his sons are spending it for him as fast as they can. One day when he was talking to my father, he hinted that he had taken this remote place, the Granary, and brought them down here, to get them out of the fast lives they were leading in London. He got afraid, he said."

"Have the sons no professions?"

"Don't seem to have. Or anything else that's good—money excepted."

"What do they do with their time?"

"Anything. Idle it away. Keep dogs, and shoot, and fish, and lounge and smoke, and—Halloa! look yonder, Johnny!"

Briar Wood had no straight and direct road through it; but plenty of small paths and byways and turnings and windings, that might bring you, by good luck, to landing at last; or might take you unconsciously back whence you came. Emerging from a part, where the trees grew dark and dense and thick, upon one of those delightful glades I spoke of before, we saw what I took to be a small gipsy encampment. A fire of sticks, with a kettle upon it, smoked upon the ground; beside it sat a young woman and child; a few tin wares, tied together, lay in a corner, and some rabbits skins were stretched out to dry on the branches of trees.

Up started the woman, and came swiftly towards us. A regular

gipsy with the purple-black hair, the yellow skin, and the large gleaming eyes. It was a beautiful young face, but worn and thin and anxious.

"Do you want your fortunes told, my good young gentlemen? I can——"

"Not a bit of it," interrupted Bill. "Go back to your fire. We are only passing through."

"I can read the lines of your hands unerringly, my pretty sirs. I can forewarn you of evil, and prepare you for good."

"Now look you here," cried Bill, turning upon her good-humouredly, as she followed us up with a lot of the like stuff, "I can forewarn *you* of it, unless you are content to let us alone. This wood belongs to Sir John Whitney, as I daresay all your fraternity know, and his keepers wage war against you when they find you are encamped here, and that I am sure you know. Mind your own affairs, and you may stay here in peace, for me: keep on bothering us, and I go straight to Rednal and give him a hint. I am Sir John's son."

He threw her a sixpence, and the woman's face changed as she caught it. The persuasive smile vanished as if by magic, giving place to a look of anxious pain. It struck Bill so greatly as to arrest him.

"What's the matter?"

"Do you know my husband, sir?" she asked. "It's more than likely that you do."

"And what if I do?" cried Whitney.

The woman took the words to be an affirmative answer. She drew near, and laid her small brown finger on his coat sleeve.

"Then, if you chance to meet him, sir, persuade him to come back to me for the love of heaven. I *can* read the future: and for some days past, since we first halted here, I have foreseen that evil is in store for him. He won't believe me; he is not one of *us;* but I scent it in the air, and it comes nearer and nearer; it is drawing very close now. He may listen to you, sir, for we respect Sir John, who is never hard on us as some are; and oh, send him back here to me and the child! Better that it should fall on him when by our side than away from us."

"Why—what do you mean?" cried Whitney, surprised out of the question, and hardly understanding her words or their purport. And he might have laughed outright, as he told me later, but for the dreadful trouble that shone forth from her sad, wild eyes.

"I don't know what I mean: it's hidden from me," she answered, taking the words in a somewhat different light from what he meant them. "I think it may be sudden sickness; or it may be evil trouble: whatever it is, it will end badly."

Whitney nodded to her, and we pursued our way. I had been looking at the little girl, who had drawn shyly up to gaze at us. She was fair as a lily, with a sweet face and eyes blue as the sky.

"What humbugs they are!" exclaimed Whitney, alluding to gipsies and tramps in general. "As to this one, I should say she's going off her head!"

"Do you know her husband?"

"Don't know him from Adam. Johnny, I hope that's not a stolen child! Fair as she is, she can't be the woman's: there's nothing of the gipsy in her composition."

"How well the gipsy speaks! With quite a refined accent."

"Gipsies often do, I've heard. Let us get on."

What with this adventure, and dawdling, and taking a wrong turn or two, it was past one o'clock when we got in, and they were laying the cloth for dinner. The green mossy glade, with the sheltering trees around, the banks and the dells, the ferns and wild flowers, made a picture of a retreat on a broiling day. The table (some boards, brought from the Hall, and laid on trestles) stood in the middle of the grass; and Helen and Anna Whitney, in their green and white muslins, were just as busy as bees placing the dishes upon it. Lady Whitney (with a face redder than beetroot) helped them: she liked to be always doing something. Miss Cattledon and the Mater were pacing the dell below, and Miss Deveen sat talking with the Squire and Sir John.

"Have they not got here?" exclaimed William.

"Have who not got here?" retorted Helen.

"Todhetley and the boys."

"Ages ago. They surmised that you two must be lost, stolen, or strayed."

"Then where are they?"

"Making themselves useful. Johnny Ludlow, I wish you'd go after them, and tell them of all things to bring a corkscrew. Nobody can find ours, and we think it is left behind."

"Why, here's the corkscrew, in my pocket," called out Sir John. "Whatever brings it there? And——What's that great thing, moving down to us?"

It was Tod with a wooden stool upon his head, legs upwards. Rednal the gamekeeper lived close by, and it was arranged that we should borrow chairs, and things, from his cottage.

We sat down to dinner at last—and a downright jolly dinner it was. Plenty of good things to eat, cider, lemonade, and champagne to drink: and everybody talking together, and bursts of laughter.

"Look at Cattledon!" cried Bill in my ear. "She is as merry as the rest of us."

So she was. A whole sea of smiles on her thin face. She wore a grey gown as genteel as herself, bands of black velvet round her pinched-in waist and long throat. Cattledon looked like vinegar in general, it's true; but I don't say she was bad at heart. Even she could be genial to-day, and the rest of us were off our head with jollity, the Squire's face and Sir John's beaming back at one another.

If we had but foreseen how pitifully the day was to end! It makes me think of some verses I once learnt out of a Journal—Chambers's, I believe. The magazine goes on to me about "limited space," but I'll put them in here. It can but strike them out.

"There are twin Genii, who, strong and mighty,
Under their guidance mankind retain;
And the name of the lovely one is Pleasure,
And the name of the loathly one is Pain.
Never divided, where one can enter
Ever the other comes close behind;
And he who in Pleasure his thoughts would centre
Surely Pain in the search shall find!

Alike they are, though in much they differ—
Strong resemblance is 'twixt the twain;
So that sometimes you may question whether
It can be Pleasure you feel, or Pain.
Thus 'tis, that whatever of deep emotion
Stirreth the heart—be it grave or gay,
Tears are the Symbol—from feeling's ocean
These are the fountains that rise to-day.

Should not this teach us calmly to welcome
Pleasure when smiling our hearths beside?
If she be the substance, how dark the shadow;
Close doth it follow, the near allied.
Or if Pain long o'er our threshold hover,
Let us not question but Pleasure nigh
Bideth her time her face to discover,
Rainbow of Hope in a clouded sky."

Yes, it was a good time. To look at us round that dinner table, you'd have said there was nothing but pleasure in the world. Not but that ever and anon the poor young gipsy woman's troubled face and her sad wild eyes would rise between me and the light.

The afternoon was getting on when I got back to the glade with William Whitney (for we had all gone strolling about after dinner) and found some of the ladies there. The Mater had gone into Rednal's cottage to talk to his wife, Jessy, and Anna was below in the dell. A clean-looking, stout old lady, in a light cotton gown and white apron, a mob cap with a big border and bow of ribbon in front of it, turned round from talking to them, smiled, and made me a curtsey.

The face seemed familiar to me: but where had I seen it before? Helen Whitney, seeing my puzzled look, spoke up in her free manner.

"Have you no memory, Johnny Ludlow? Don't you remember Mrs. Ness?—and the fortunes she told us on the cards?"

It came upon me with a rush. That drizzling Good Friday afternoon at Miss Deveen's, long ago, and Helen smuggling up the

old lady from downstairs to tell her fortune. But what brought her here? There seemed to be no connection between Miss Deveen's house in town and Briar Wood in Worcestershire. I could not have been more at sea had I seen a Chinese lady from Pekin. Miss Deveen laughed.

"And yet it is so easy of explanation, Johnny, so simple and straightforward. Mrs. Ness chances to be aunt to Rednal's wife, and she is staying down here with them."

Simple it was—as are most other puzzles when you get the clue. The old woman was a great protégée of Miss Deveen's, who had known her through her life of misfortune: but Miss Deveen did not before know of her relationship to Rednal's wife or that she was staying at their cottage. They had been talking of that past afternoon and the fortune-telling in it, when I and Bill came up.

"And what I told you, miss, came true—now didn't it?" cried Mrs. Ness to Helen.

"True! Why, you told me *nothing!*" retorted Helen. "There was nothing in the fortune. You said there was nothing in the cards."

"I remember it," said Mother Ness; "remember it well. The cards showed no husband for you then, young lady; they might tell different now. But they showed some trouble about it, I recollect."

Helen's face fell. There had indeed been trouble. Trouble again and again. Richard Foliott, the false, had brought it to her; and so did Charles Leafchild, now lying in his grave at Worcester: not to speak of poor Slingsby Temple. Helen had got over all those crosses now, and was looking up again. She was of a nature to look up again from whatever evil befell her, short of losing her head off her shoulders. All dinner time she had been flirting with Featherston's nephew.

This suggestion of Mrs. Ness, "the cards might tell different now," caught hold of her mind. Her colour slightly deepened, her eyes sparkled.

"Have you the cards with you now, Mrs. Ness?"

"Ay, to be sure, young lady. I never come away from home without my cards. They be in the cottage yonder."

"Then I should like my fortune told again."

"Oh, Helen, how can you be so silly!" cried Lady Whitney.

"Silly! Why, mamma, it is good fun. You go and fetch the cards, Mrs. Ness."

"I and Johnny nearly got our fortune told to day," put in Bill, while Mrs. Ness stood where she was, hardly knowing what to be at. "We came upon a gipsy woman in the wood, and she wanted to promise us a wife apiece. A little girl was with her that may have been stolen: she was too fair to be that brown woman's child."

"It must have been the Norths," exclaimed Mrs. Ness. "Was there some tinware by 'em, sir; and some rabbit skins?"

"Yes. Both. The rabbit skins were hanging out to dry."

"Ay, it's the Norths," repeated Mrs. Ness. "Rednal said he saw North yesterday, and guessed they'd lighted their camp fire not far off."

"Who are the Norths? Gipsies?"

"The wife is a gipsy, sir; born and bred. He is a native of these parts, and superior; but he took to an idle, wandering life, and married the gipsy girl for her beauty. She was Bertha Lee then."

"Why it is quite a romance," said Miss Deveen, amused.

"And so it is, ma'am. Rednal told me all on't. They tramp the country, selling their tins and collecting rabbit skins."

"And is the child theirs?" asked Bill.

"Ay, sir, it be. But she don't take after her mother; she's like him, her skin fair as alabaster. You'd not think, Rednal says, that she'd got a drop o' gipsy blood in her veins. North might ha' done well had he only turned out steady; been just the odds o' what he is—a poor tramp."

"Oh, come, never mind the gipsies," cried Helen, impatiently. "You go and bring the cards, Mrs. Ness."

One can't go in for stilts at a picnic, or wisdom either, and when Mrs. Ness brought her cards (which might have been cleaner) none of them made any objection; even Cattledon looked on, grimly tolerant.

"But you can't think there's anything in it—that the cards tell true," cried Lady Whitney to the old woman.

"Ma'am, be sure they do. I believe in 'em from my very heart. And so, I make bold to say, would everybody here believe, if they had read the things upon 'em that I've read, and seen how surely they've come to pass."

They would not contradict her openly; only smiled a little among themselves. Mother Ness was busy with the cards, laying them out for Helen's fortune. I drew near to listen.

"You look just as though you put faith in it," whispered Bill to me.

"I don't put faith in it. I should not like to be so foolish. But, William, what she told Helen before *did* come true."

Well, Helen's "fortune" was told again. It sounded just as uneventful as the one told that rainy afternoon long ago—for we were now some years older than we were then. Helen Whitney's future, according to the cards, or to Dame Ness's reading of them, would be all plain sailing, smooth and easy, and unmarked alike by events and by care. A most desirable career, some people would think, but Helen looked the picture of desolation.

"And you say I am not to be married!" she exclaimed.

Dame Ness had her head bent over the cards. She shook it without looking up.

"I don't see a ring nowhere, young lady, and that's the blessed truth. There *ain't* one; that's more. There ain't a sign o' one. Neither was there the other time, I remember: that time in London. And so—I take it that there won't never be."

"Then I think you are a very disagreeable, story-telling old woman!" flashed Helen, all candour in her mortification. "Not be married, indeed!"

"Why, my dear, I'd be only too glad to promise you a husband if the cards foretelled it," said Dame Ness, pityingly. "Yours is the best fortune of all, though, if you could but bring your mind to see it. Husbands is more plague nor profit. I'm sure I had cause to say so by the one that fell to my share."

In high dudgeon Helen pushed the cards together. Mrs. Ness, getting some kind words from the rest of us, curtsied as she went off to the cottage to see about the kettles for our tea.

"You are a nice young lady!" exclaimed Bill. "Showing your temper because the cards don't give you a sweetheart!"

Helen threw her fan at him. "Mind your own business," retorted she. And he went away laughing.

"And, my dear, I say the same as William," added Lady Whitney. "One really might think that you were—were *eager* to be married."

"All cock-a-hoop for it," struck in Cattledon, speaking for Helen's benefit, and looking as prim as you please. "As the housemaids are."

"And no such great crime, either," returned Helen, defiantly. "Fancy that absurd old thing telling me I never should be!"

"Helen, my dear, I think the chances are that you will not be married," quietly spoke Miss Deveen.

"Oh—*do* you!"

"Don't be cross, Helen. Our destinies are not in our own hands."

Helen bit her lip, laughed, and recovered her temper. She was like her father; apt to flash out a hot word, but never angry long.

"Now—please, Miss Deveen, *why* do you think I shall not be?" she asked playfully.

"Because, my dear, you have had three chances, so to say, of marriage, and each time it has been frustrated. In two of the instances by—if we may dare to say it—the interposition of Heaven. The young men died beforehand in an unexpected and unforeseen manner: Charles Leafchild and Mr. Temple ——"

"I never was engaged to Mr. Temple," interrupted Helen.

"No; but, by all I hear, you shortly would have been."

Helen gave no answer. She knew perfectly well that she had expected an offer from Slingsby Temple; that his death, as she believed, alone prevented its being made. She'd have said Yes to it, too. Miss Deveen went on.

"We will not give more than an allusion to Captain Foliott; he

does not deserve it; but your marriage with him came nearest of all. It may be said, Helen, without exaggeration, that you have been on the point of marriage twice, and very nearly so a third time. Now what does this prove?"

"That luck was against me," said Helen, lightly.

"Ay, child: luck, as we call it in this world. I would rather say, Destiny. *God knows best.* Do you wonder that I have never married?" continued Miss Deveen in a less serious tone.

"I never thought about it," answered Helen.

"I know that some people have wondered at it; for I was a girl likely to marry—or it may be better to say, likely to be sought in marriage. I had good looks, good temper, good birth, and a good fortune: and I daresay I was just as willing to be chosen as all young girls are. Yes, I say that all girls possess an innate wish to marry; it is implanted in their nature, comes with their mother's milk. Let their station be high or low, a royal princess, if you will, or the housemaid Jemima Cattledon suggested but now, the same natural instinct lies within each—a wish to be a wife. And no reason, either, why they should not wish it; it's nothing to be ashamed of; and Helen, my dear, I would rather hear a girl avow it openly, as you do, than pretend to be shocked at its very mention."

Some gleams of sunlight flickered on Miss Deveen's white hair and fine features as she sat under the trees, her bronze-coloured silk gown falling around her in rich folds, and a big amethyst brooch fastening her collar. I began to think how good-looking she must have been when young, and where the eyes of the young men of those days could have been. Lady Whitney, looking like a bundle in her light dress that ill became her, sat near fanning herself.

"Yes, I do wonder, now I think of it, that you never married," said Helen.

"To tell you the truth, I wonder myself sometimes," replied Miss Deveen, smiling. "I think—I believe—that, putting other advantages aside, I was well calculated to be a wife, and should have made a good one. Not that *that* has anything to do with it; for you see the most incapable of women marry, and who remain incapable to their dying day. I could mention wives at this moment, within the circle of my acquaintance, who are no more fit to be wives than is that three-legged stool Johnny is balancing himself upon; and who in consequence unwittingly keep their husbands and their homes in a state of perpetual turmoil. I was not one of these, I am sure; but here I am, unmarried still."

"Would you marry now?" asked Helen briskly: and we all burst into a laugh at the question, Miss Deveen's the merriest.

"Marry at sixty! Not if I know it. I have at least twenty years too many for that; some might say thirty. But I don't believe many women give up the idea of marriage before they are forty: and I do not see why they should."

"But — why did you not marry, Miss Deveen?"

"Ah, my dear, if you wish for an answer to that question you must ask it of Heaven. I cannot give one. All I can tell you is, that I did hope to be married, and expected to be married, *waited* to be married; but here you see me in my old age—Miss Deveen."

"Did you—never have a chance of it—an opportunity?" questioned Helen with hesitation.

"I had more than one chance: I had two or three chances, just as you have had. During the time that each 'chance' was passing, if we may give it the term, I thought assuredly I should soon be a wife. But each chance melted away from this cause or that cause, ending in nothing. And the conclusion I have come to, Helen, for many a year past, is, that God, for some wise purpose of His own, decreed that I should not marry. What we know not here, we shall know hereafter."

Her tone had changed to one of deep reverence. She did not go on for a little time.

"When I look around the world and note how many admirable women see their chances of marriage dwindle down one after another, from unexpected and apparently trifling causes, it is impossible not to feel that the finger of God is at work. That——"

"But now, Miss Deveen, we *could* marry if we would—all of us," interrupted Helen. "If we did not have to regard suitability and propriety, and all that, there's not a girl but could go off to church and marry *somebody*."

"If it's only a broomstick," acquiesced Miss Deveen, "or a man no better than one. Yes, Helen, you are right: and it has occasionally been done. But when we fly antagonistically in the teeth of circumstances, bent on following our own resolute path, we take ourselves out of God's hands—and must reap the consequences."

"I—do not—quite understand," slowly spoke Helen.

"Suppose I give you an instance of what I mean, my dear. Some years ago I knew a young lady——"

"Is it *true?* What was her name?"

"Certainly, it is true, every detail of it. As to her name—well, I do not see any reason why I should not tell it: her name was Eliza Lake. I knew her family very well indeed, was intimate with her mother. Eliza was the third daughter, and desperately eager to be married. Her chances came. The first offer was eligible; but the two families could not agree about money matters, and it dropped through. The next offer Eliza would not accept—it was from a widower with children, and she sent him to the right-about. The third went on smoothly nearly to the wedding day, and a good and suitable match it would have been, but something occurred then very unpleasant, though I never knew the precise particulars. The bridegroom-to-be got into some trouble, or difficulty, had to quit his country hastily, and the marriage was broken off—was at an end.

That was the last offer she had, so far as I knew; and the years went on, Eliza gadding out to parties, and flirting and coquetting, all in the hope to get a husband. When she was in her thirtieth year, her mother came to me one day in much distress and perplexity. Eliza was taking the reins into her own hands, purposing to be married in spite of her father, mother, and friends. Mrs. Lake wanted me to talk to Eliza; and I took an opportunity of doing so—freely. It is of no use to mince matters when you want to save a girl from ruin. I recalled the past to her memory, saying that I believed, judging by that, Heaven did not intend her to marry. I told her all the ill I had heard of the man she was now choosing; that she had absolutely thrown herself at him, and he had responded for the sake of the little money she possessed; and that if she persisted in marrying him she would assuredly rue it."

"And what was her answer to you?"—Helen spoke as if her breath were short.

"Just the reckless answer that a blinded, foolish girl would make. 'Though Heaven and earth were against me, I should marry him, Miss Deveen. I am beyond the control of parents, brothers, sisters, friends; and I will not die an old maid to please any of you.' Those were the wilful words she used, I have never forgotten them; and the next week she betook herself to church."

"Did the marriage turn out badly?"

"Ay, it did. Could you expect anything else? Poor Eliza supped the cup of sorrow to its dregs: and she brought sorrow also on her family. *That*, Helen, is what I call taking oneself out of God's hands, and flying determinately in the face of what is right, and seemly, and *evidently appointed*."

"You say yourself it is hard not to be married," quoth Helen.

"No, I do not," laughed Miss Deveen. "I say that it appears hard to us when our days of youth are passing, and we see our companions chosen and ourselves left: but, rely upon it, Helen, as we advance in years we acquiesce in the decree; many of us learning to be thankful for it."

"And you young people little think what cause you have to be thankful for it," cried Lady Whitney all in a heat. "Marriage brings a peck of cares: and nobody knows what anxiety boys and girls entail until they have them."

Miss Deveen nodded emphatically. "It is very true. I would not exchange my present lot with that of the best wife in England; believe that, or not, as you will, Helen. Of all the different states this busy earth can produce, a lot such as mine is the most exempt from trouble. And, my dear, if you are destined never to marry, you have a great deal more cause to be thankful than rebellious."

"The other day, when you were preaching to us, you told us that trouble came for our own benefit," grumbled Helen, passing into rebellion forthwith.

"I remember it," assented Miss Deveen, "and very true it is. My heart has sickened before now at witnessing the troubles, apparently unmerited, that some people, whether married or single, have to undergo; and I might have been almost tempted to question the loving-kindness of Heaven, but for remembering that we must through much tribulation enter into the Kingdom."

Anna interrupted the silence that ensued. She came running up with a handful of wild roses and sweetbriar, gathered in the hedge below. Miss Deveen took them when offered to her, saying she thought of all flowers the wild rose was the sweetest.

"How solemn you all look!" cried Anna.

"Don't we!" said Helen. "I have been having a lecture read to me."

"By whom?"

"Everybody here—except Johnny Ludlow. And I am sure I hope *he* was edified. I wonder when tea is going to be ready!"

"Directly, I should say," said Anna: "for here comes Mrs. Ness with the cups and saucers."

I ran forward to help her bring the things. Rednal's trim wife, a neat, active woman with green eyes and a baby in her arms, was following with plates of bread-and-butter and cake, and the news that the kettle was "on the boil." Presently the table was spread; and William, who had come back to us, took up the baby's whistle and blew a blast, prolonged and shrill.

The stragglers heard it, understood it was the signal for their return, and came flocking in. The Squire and Sir John said they had been sitting under the trees and talking: our impression was, they had been sleeping. The young Whitneys appeared in various stages of heat; Tod and Featherston's nephew smelt of smoke.

The first cups of tea had gone round, and Tod was making for Rednal's cottage with a notice that the bread-and-butter had come to an end, when I saw a delicate little fair-haired face peering at us from amid the trees.

"Halloa!" cried the Squire, catching sight of the face at the same moment. "Who on earth's that?"

"It's the child we saw this morning—the gipsy's child," exclaimed William Whitney. "Here, you little one! Stop! Come here."

We only meant to give her a piece of cake: but the child ran off with a scared look and fleet step, and was lost in the trees. "Senseless little thing!" cried Bill: and sat down to his tea again.

"But what a pretty child it was!" observed the Mater. "She put me in mind of Lena."

"Why, Lena's oceans of years older," said Helen, free with her remarks as usual. "That child, from the glimpse I caught of her, can't be more than five or six."

"She is about seven, miss," struck in Rednal's wife, who had just come up with a fresh supply of tea. "It is nigh upon eight years since young Walter North went off and got married."

"Walter North!" repeated Sir John. "Who's Walter North? Let me see? The name seems familiar to me."

"Old Walter North was the parish schoolmaster over at Easton, sir. The son turned out wild and bad; and at the time his father died he went off and joined the gipsies. They had used to encamp about here more than they do now, as Rednal could tell you, Sir John; and it was said young North was in love with a girl belonging to the tribe—Bertha Lee. Any way, they got married. Right-down beautiful she was—for a gipsy; and so young."

"Then I suppose North and his wife are here now—if that's their child?" remarked Sir John.

"They are here sure enough, sir; somewhere in the wood. Rednal has seen him about this day or two past. Two or three times they'll be here, pestering, during the summer, and stop ten or twelve days. Maybe young North has a hankering after the old spots he was brought up in, and comes to see 'em," suggestively added Rednal's wife; whose tongue ran faster than any other two women's put together. And that's saying something.

"And how does this young North get a living?" asked Sir John. "By poaching?—and rifling the poultry-yards?"

"Like enough he do, Sir John. Them tramps have mostly light fingers."

"They sell tins—and collect rabbit skins," struck in William. "Johnny Ludlow and I charged the encampment this morning, and nearly got our fortunes told."

Jessy Rednal's chin went up. "They'd better let Rednal catch 'em at their fortune-telling!—it was the wife, I know, sir, did that. When she was but a slip of a girl she'd go up as bold as brass to any gentleman or lady passing, and ask them to cross her hand with silver."

With this parting fling at the gipsies, Rednal's wife ran off to the cottage for another basin of sugar. The heat made us thirsty, and we wanted about a dozen cups of tea apiece.

But now, I don't know why it was, but I had rather taken a fancy to this young woman, Bertha North, and did not believe the words "as bold as brass" could be properly applied to her. Gipsy though she was, her face, for good feeling and refinement, was worth ten of Jessy Rednal's. It's true she had followed us, wanting to tell our fortunes, but she might have been hard up for money.

When we had swallowed as much tea as the kettles would produce, and cleared the plates of the eatables, Sir John suggested that it would soon be time to move homewards, as the evening would be coming on. This had the effect of scattering some of us at once. If they did not get us, they could not take us. "Home, indeed! so soon as this!" cried Helen, wrathfully—and rushed off with her brother Harry and Featherston's nephew.

I was ever so far down one of the wood paths, looking about, for

somehow I had missed them all, when sounds of wailing and crying from a young voice struck my ear. In a minute, that same fair little child came running into view, as if she were flying for her life, her sobs wild with some terror, her face white as death.

What she said I could not make out, though she made straight up to me and caught my arm; the language seemed strange, the breath gone. But there was no mistaking the motions: she pulled me along with her across the wood, her little arms and eyes frantically imploring.

Something must be amiss, I thought. What was it?

"Is there a mad bull in the way, little one? And are you making off with me to do battle with him?"

No elucidation from the child: only the sobs, and the words I did not catch. But we were close to the outskirts of the wood now (it was but narrow), and there, beyond the hedge that bordered it, crouched down against the bank, was a man. A fair-faced, good-looking young man, small and slight, and groaning with pain.

No need to wonder who he was: the likeness between him and the child betrayed it. How like they were! even to the expression in the large blue eyes, and the colour of the soft fair hair. The child's face was his own in miniature.

"You are Walter North," I said. "And what's to do?"

His imploring eyes in their pitiful pain looked up to mine, as if he would question how I needed to ask it. Then he pulled his fustian coat aside and pointed to his side. It made me start a step back. The side was steeped in blood.

"Oh, dear, what is it?—what has caused it? An accident?"

"I have been shot," he answered—and I thought his voice sounded ominously weak. "Shot from over yonder."

Looking across the field in front of us towards which he pointed, I could see nothing. I mean nothing likely to have shot him. No men, no guns. Off to the left, partly buried amid its grounds, lay the old house called the Granary; to the right in the distance, Vale Farm. The little child was stretched on the ground, quiet now, her head on his right shoulder; it was the left side that was injured. Suddenly, he whispered a few words to her; she sprang up with a sob and darted into the wood. The child, as we heard later, had been sent out by her mother to look for her father: it was in seeking for him that she had come upon our tea-party and peeped at us. Later, she found him, fallen where he was now, just after the shot was fired. In her terror she was flying off for assistance, and met me. The man's hat lay near him, also an old drab-coloured bag, some tin basins, and a Dutch oven.

"Can I move you, to put you easier?" I asked amid his groaning. "Can I do anything in the world to help you?"

"No, no, don't touch me," he said, in a hopeless tone. "I am bleeding to death."

And I thought he was. His cheeks and lips were getting paler with every minute. The man's diction was as good as mine; and, tramp though he was, many a gentleman has not half as nice a face as his.

"If you don't mind being left, I will run for a doctor—old Featherston."

Before he could answer yes or no, Harry Vale, who must have espied us from their land, came running up.

"Why—what in the world?" he began—"is it you, North? What? Shot, you say?"

"From over yonder, sir; and I've got my death-blow: I think I have. Perhaps if Featherston ——"

"I'll fetch him," cried Harry Vale. "You stay here with him, Johnny." And he darted away like a lamplighter, his long legs skimming the grass.

I am nothing but a muff; you know that of old. And never did I feel my own deficiencies come home to me as they did then. Anybody else might have known how to stop the bleeding—for of course it ought to be stopped—if only by stuffing a handkerchief into the wound. I did not dare attempt it; I was worse at any kind of surgery than a born imbecile. All in a moment, as I stood there, the young gipsy woman's words of the morning flashed into my mind. She had foreseen some ill for him, she said; had scented it in the air. How strange it seemed!

The next to come upon the scene was the Squire, crushing through the brambles when he heard our voices. He and Sir John, in dire wrath at our flight, had come out to look for us and marshal us back for the start home. I gave him a few whispered words of explanation.

"What!" cried he. "Dying?" and his face went as pale as the man's. "Oh, my poor fellow, I am sorry for this!"

Stooping over him, the Squire pulled the coat aside. The stains were larger now, the flow was greater. North bent his head forward to look, and somehow got his hand wet in the process. Wet and red. He snatched it away with a kind of horror. The sight seemed to bring upon him the conviction that his minutes were numbered. His *minutes*. Which is the last and greatest terror that can seize upon man.

"I'm going before God now, and I'm not fit for it," he cried, a shrieking tone, born of emotion, in his weakening voice. "Can there be any mercy for me?"

The Squire seemed to feel it—he has said so since—as one of the most solemn moments of his life. He took off his spectacles—a habit of his when much excited—dropped them into his pocket, and clasped his hands together.

"There's mercy with the Lord Jesus always," he said, bending over the troubled face. "He pardoned the thief on the cross. He pardoned all who came to him. If you are Walter North, as they

tell me, you must know all this as well as I do. Lord God have mercy upon this poor dying man, for Christ's sake!"

And perhaps the good lessons that North had learnt in childhood from his mother, for she was a good woman, came back to him then to comfort him. He lifted his own hands towards the skies, and half the terror went out of his face.

Somebody once said, I believe, that by standing stock still in the Strand, and staring at any given point, he could collect a crowd about him in no time. In the thronged thoroughfares of London that's not to be surprised at; but what I'd like to know is this—how is it that people collect in deserts? They *do*, and you must have seen it often. Before many minutes were over we had quite a levee: Sir John Whitney, William, and Featherston's nephew; three or four labourers from Vale Farm; Harry Vale, who had outrun Featherston; and one of the tall sons of Colonel Leonard. The latter, a young fellow with lazy limbs, a lazy voice, and supercilious manner, strolled up, smacking a dog-whip.

"What's the row here?" cried he: and William Whitney told him. The man had been shot: by whom or by what means, whether wilfully or accidentally, remained to be discovered.

"Did you do it—or your brothers?" asked Harry Vale of him in a low tone. And Leonard whirled round to face Vale with a haughty stare.

"What the devil do you mean? What should we want to shoot a tramp for?"

"Any way, you were practising with pistols at your target over yonder this afternoon."

Leonard did not condescend to reply. The words had angered him. By no possibility could a shot, aimed at their target, come into this direction. The dog-whip shook, as if he felt inclined to use it on Harry Vale for his insolent suggestion.

"Such a fuss over a tramp!" cried Leonard to Sir John, not caring who heard him. "I daresay the fellow was caught thieving, and got served out for his pains. Look here!"

Catching hold of the bag to shake it, out tumbled a dead hen with ruffled feathers. Sir John looked grave. Leonard held it up.

"I thought so. It is still warm. He has stolen it from some poultry-yard."

I chanced to be standing close to North as Leonard said it, and felt a feeble twitch at my trousers. Poor North was trying to attract my attention; gazing up at me with the most anxious face.

"No," said he, but he was almost too faint to speak now. "No. Tell them, sir, No."

But Harry Vale was already taking up the defence. "You are wrong, Mr. Herbert Leonard. I gave that hen myself to North half an hour ago. Some little lads, my cousins, are at the farm to-day, and one of them accidentally killed the hen. Knowing our

people would not care to use it, I called to North, who chanced to be passing at the time, and told him he might take it if he liked."

A gleam of a smile, checked by a sob, passed over the poor man's face. Things wear a different aspect to us in the hour of death from what they do in lusty life. It may be that North saw then that theft, even of a fowl, *was* theft, and felt glad to be released from the suspicion. Sir John looked as pleased as Punch: one does not like to hear wrong brought home to a dying man.

Leonard turned off indifferently, and strolled back across the field, clacking his whip; and Featherston came pelting up.

The first thing the doctor did, when he had seen North's face, was to take a phial and small glass out of his pocket, and give him something to drink. Next, he made a clear sweep of us all round, and knelt down to examine the wound, just as the poor gipsy wife, fetched by the child, appeared in sight.

"Is there any hope?" whispered the Squire.

"Hope!" cried Featherston. "In half an hour it will be over."

"God help him!" prayed the Squire. "God pardon and take him!"

Well, well—that is about all there is to tell. Poor North died there as he lay, in the twilight; his wife's arm round his neck, and his little girl feebly clasped to him.

What an end to the bright and pleasant day! Sir John thanked Heaven openly that it was not we who had caused the calamity.

"For *somebody* must have shot him, lads," he observed, "though I daresay it was accidental. And it might have chanced to be one of you—there's no telling: you are not too cautious with your guns."

The "somebody" turned out to be George Leonard. Harry Vale (who had strong suspicions) was right. When they dispersed after their target practising, one of them, George, went towards Briar Wood, his pistol loaded. The thick trees afforded a promising mark, he thought, and he carelessly let off the pistol at them. Whether he saw that he had shot a man was never known; he denied it out and out: didn't know one was there, he protested. A waggoner, passing homewards with his team, who had seen him fire the pistol, came forward to say so; or it might have been a mystery to the end. "Accidental Death," decided the jury at the inquest; but they recommended the supercilious young man (just as indifferent as his brothers) to take care what he fired at for the future. Mr. George did not take the rebuke kindly.

For these sons had hard, bad natures; and were doing their best to bring their father's grey hairs with sorrow to the grave.

JOHNNY LUDLOW.

THROUGH HOLLAND.

I LEFT Utrecht for Zwolle, the capital of Over-Yssel, by the mid-day train. Would the reader like a somewhat more detailed description of Dutch scenery than has until now been inflicted upon him? It changes completely in aspect from that hitherto met with in Holland.

In a very short time we halt at De Bilt, a small station that rejoices in a plantation of fir trees, and looks as deserted as a settlement in the backwoods of America. Now comes a long waste of downs; sand plains in part covered with gorse, and ruby heather fading to a thin claret. Now a long stretch of young trees; some to be transplanted by-and-by to less wild and desolate regions; others to useful and domestic purposes. Beyond all these trees and sand and gorse one could almost imagine the sea roaring, for though concealed it is there. Now a break, disclosing a church, and a couple of windmills, apparently twins. The long stretch of arid plain distributes itself into miniature sandhills, which the sun here and there turns into gold. The train slackens and stops.

This is Goest. To our left, flat downs, barren and patchy; to our right, the country really undulating into slopes, perfectly clothed in rich gorse and heather. Far as the eye can reach all is green, purple, and golden. In the distance one solitary white house meets the eye, undisputed monarch of all it surveys. Here and there sheep browse upon the heathery plain. They seem to enjoy their repast so much that, involuntarily, we think of the greedy little pigs in a story of childhood's days, who at feeding time invariably grunted out, "Sweet cobs! nice cobs! juicy cobs! more cobs!" One wonders whether at sundown these sheep find their way by instinct to their own pens, or are allowed to rove about on the moors at will—like those sheep in the biped world who are not considered white. The gorse, standing out in so rich a contrast with the green and the purple, occasionally rises to the dignity of immense bushes. Upon a long stretch of flat plain, across there, some cavalry from Amersfoort are exercising. All this passes, and we come to thick plantations of oak trees, firs, and stiff, gloomy-looking pines. The train stops at Amersfoort.

A quaint and curious old place, as a fellow-traveller observes. Certainly the wonderful old tower, with its crown-shaped summit, is in itself a promise of many good things that might be disclosed if the intervening trees were only cut down. One longs to get out and make more intimate acquaintance with this venerable edifice: grave and ancient save in its crown-summit and gilded weathercock.

The latter points, alas, to S.W., and foretells rain. The clouds indeed are gathering depth and approaching the earth. Our twenty minutes' halt has changed the bright sunshine into gloom. So, projections from that tower, which look like gurgoyles, but we fancy are not, appear to be sending forth a doom upon the world. Off we go again. Towards the town, a small flock of people, who have just left the train, are wending their way, including three priests with long robes and Gamp-like umbrellas and tall black hats. Another halt before we have got many yards, to take up a late passenger running round the corner in breathless excitement. They are not particular about here, and obligingly wait five minutes on occasion for an approaching individual; or when they have started will put back again to admit him. We have halted in front of a garden of sunflowers, their faces turned southwards and upwards, announcing as plainly as a dial that the day has passed its meridian.

Off again, this time with a fair start, and the tower looms out grandly in the distance. The surrounding country changes aspect and is broken up into fields and hedges, whilst sheaves of grain give promise that presently the plough will be briskly at work here. The country is soon cut up into immense plantations of oak trees, which again yield to pastures and the inevitable black-and-white cows. Now fields of cabbages, orchards with fruit-laden trees, a tower cleaving the grey sky, a few straggling cottages with their red-tiled roofs, and the train stops at Nykerk. It runs beyond the station, and a buxom young lady, with a bandbox, and flowing robes, and bewitching dimples, is lifted down quite a precipitous height, amidst much laughter and blushing, by the guard and the stationmaster; the latter resplendent in a red cap and a gold band. But, like the day, he has passed his meridian, whilst the guard is young, active, and well shaped; and somehow the buxom young lady contrives to catch her foot in that troublesome dress of hers, and would fall heavily to the ground, but that she falls far more lightly and gracefully into the arms of the least reluctant guard in the world. She blushes still more vividly and makes a host of apologies, but the guard, whose face reflects her own rosy hue, is evidently wondering how he can manage to ask her to repeat the performance. Whilst he is yet ruminating the young lady disappears with her dimples, and blushes, and bandbox—and the train moves on. A few minutes of rapid movement, and an old woman comes out of a signal-box, with a long stick or flag, to indicate that the line is clear. She is a quaint picturesque object with her short blue petticoats, her red kerchief crossed over the shoulders, and her low mushroom hat. Picturesque, to the unfamiliar traveller's eye, at any rate. To the guard, who is leaning out of his window, thinking of the delicious armful of maidenly beauty in all her spring freshness, to which he has just been treated, the old woman probably suggests no other idea than that of parchment, or a mummy, with corresponding emotions. Only another proof that time waits for no

man. That old woman has had her day; and in that day those still pleasant and well-cut though withered features awoke sensations in some fair youth's breast as glowing as any inspired by our vanished heroine.

The train passes on through a country that discloses no new feature until we stop at Putten. The names of the various stations do not fall musically upon an Englishman's ear. The station at Putten is being rebuilt. Bricks and mortar meet the eye, and a cloud of dust more English and unpleasant than anything we have encountered this morning. In certain broad details countenances resemble each other, events repeat themselves. At Putten a goodly number of people alight, including a Saxon-looking Dutchman and his pretty wife; the latter dressed à la Quakeress: a short brown silk gown that displays small feet and neatly-turned ankles, a richly-embroidered black shawl, and a black silk cottage bonnet, a white border surrounding the face in most coquettish and alluring fashion. Let the adjectives stand, young ladies; 'tis rare enough they can be written now. And how clean and respectable those two country women look, coming up behind her, with their short black gowns and caps white as the driven snow. How they remind us of our own French nurses of earliest recollections; and how, in consequence, our heart warms towards them, as memory goes back to life's happiest period.

Here again the country opens out for a time, and distance lends enchantment to the view. Certainly there is not, for the moment, anything else to enchant. But those trees appearing across there as we proceed, those low bushes, how lovely in tone; what an exquisite olive-green beneath the grey sky: in themselves a picture. And now again, mile after mile, on either hand, plantations of young oak trees.

Suddenly the trees break up and disappear on our left, and there falls upon the enchanted sight a view of the glorious sea and a multitude of small vessels. It is not very near at hand; it is not rough or turbulent; it is even grey and cold under the leaden sky; but it is calm and unruffled; it is the sea; and a sense of grandeur and repose overtakes the spirit: refreshing as the incense of rain upon the long parched earth. The train halts at Hardewyk. We should like to get out and pay our respects to the little Zuyder Zee port, and gather up a stock of energy after the debilitating air of Amsterdam. When we depart again, after a long halt, we have lost the sea, and gradually turn inland. More downs. After Huchorst, we come upon—for Holland—positive sandhills, which might be giants' graves. They abound and increase in size until the mind, depressed by so much flat country to the level of a pancake, begins to have dim notions of possible mountains should this kind of thing go on increasing say for a thousand miles. Certainly they are interlarded by plantations of pines; and here and there a small hut and a garden, where sticks very much out of the perpendicular have been

dressed up into scarecrows to save from marauders sundry cabbages, sprinkled about like feathers upon a moulting bird. In the midst of this oasis rise a church, a windmill, and the village of Nunspeet. The train halts. These frequent and prolonged stoppages would become monotonous to anyone not as anxious for glimpses of new and original characters, not as earnest in seeking the picturesque, as ever was the renowned though not particularly refined Dr. Syntax.

As the train stops a young porter comes up with a postbag; and, passing, touches his cap. Here, at any rate, is a new trait to an Englishman. How often would a porter do the like in England, unless you happened to be known to him? After leaving this station a man issues from the sentry-box with his staff and flag, and is certainly a much less interesting object than our little withered old woman. Once more comes an immense tract of moorland, with its purple gorse, melting into blackness in that long stretch of rising ground in the horizon. A solitary crow is winging his elevated flight across the sky. Another halt, another station. But where are the church and the windmill? The eye sweeps the country and the horizon in vain. And a very wide sweep it is. They must be behind that rising ground so far away; at the end of that long, straight, white road, cut between the gorse; so long, so straight, seemingly so interminable that instinctively we shudder as we are reminded of those dreams of childhood, wherein a task was allotted to us for which eternity itself would be too short: and the horror-stricken awakening with the awful burden of a never-ending struggle. That far-away waggon on the white road looks smaller than a wheelbarrow, the horse less than a fly, whilst the waggoner is totally lost to sight. This station rejoices in a compound name—Elburg-Epe. It has been a landmark in our time table, and we begin to feel that the journey will have an end.

Off again. Moors where sheep are browsing; and an old shepherd who gazes after the train, as if such things were unknown in his young days: and the black line of rising ground in the distance, here and there shining white and golden, as the gorse gives place to bare sand: and the red sails of a windmill busy at their everlasting chase. In a few minutes a halt at Wezep: a very unimportant place, evidently, as nothing alights but a placard: possibly a warning to be placed on the moors, cautioning unwary travellers not to go astray on the wide waste. We soon come to more civilisation. For the first time men and women are working in the fields quite close to us. As the train slackens speed we notice their Dutch-Chinese countenances. The women are strong and sturdy; those men leaning over the gate with spades and pickaxes look short and undeveloped. The train halts at Hattem. From this point there are more signs of life. Rich pastures on either hand. A wealth and luxuriance of verdure and vegetation, to which nothing we have yet seen in Holland can be compared. The eye brightens, the heart

and spirit expand, as we come upon beauty so long withheld. It is food to a starving soul. You wish the train would halt that you might enjoy this at leisure: a rapid glance is altogether insufficient. Black-and-white cows are grazing in herds: they do not all mix together: probably they have their differences of rank and station, and political opinions. Farm houses, large and flourishing, are sprinkled about. A couple of modern-looking churches with tapering spires disclose themselves; busy windmills. Far off rows of trees such as we have not yet seen for size and beauty; nearer ones of ash, with their pale grey, rustling leaves. We roll over a splendid bridge spanning the broad Yssel, with lively barges upon its surface; we pass grand, park-like grounds that would almost grace a southern clime; and the train halts at Zwolle.

We reached Zwolle somewhere about four o'clock. Tired of the train, which seemed to travel upon the principle of "hurrying no man's cattle," I was glad to exchange it for the rattling omnibus, which dashed through the outskirt of the town, thundered on to the drawbridge, over a small navigable stream called the Zwarte Water, and finally, in a kind of circumbendibus fashion, stopped its mad flight at the door of the hotel.

The inn was situated in an open space or square. Before it, far down, the Zwarte Water ran its sluggish race. Trees were planted beside its banks, so that I felt surrounded by the elements of rural beauty. The inn was clean, but somewhat primitive; and as I had had the omnibus to myself, so in like manner I seemed to be the only guest within the walls of the hotel. The table d'hôte, for which I was just in time, consisted of a parti carré; three visitors out of the four coming in from the town and departing as soon as dinner was over. I followed their example, and in the twilight paid a visit to the church; a Gothic edifice with immense aisles, and one of the finest carved pulpits in Holland; and a vestry or committee room, entered by a short flight of steps at the bottom of the church, of which the sacristan was especially proud, but which seemed, in the deepening gloom, uninteresting. The good man insisted upon my mounting the pulpit to inspect the wonderful old Bible; and truly it was worth the trouble.

The town itself is ancient, but has modern houses and improvements about it which destroy its old-world effect. In this respect Zwolle is disappointing. It is clean and well built—what town in Holland is not?—and is situated on the Zwarte Water, the stream already alluded to. Few towns have gone through more perils and vicissitudes; not only of war, but also of fire, and water, and sickness. In 1398 it fell a victim to the plague, which carried off the people at an alarming rate: a more deadly foe than the enemies of the battle-field. To-day the little town is quiet and prosperous. To the chance visitor it seems very far removed from the world,

and may pursue the even tenor of its way undisturbed by the outside rush and roar. The principal street is a long, straight thoroughfare, with a few large shops rejoicing in plate-glass windows. One feels inclined to rebel against such innovations in an old capital. The shops, that night, were alight with gas, which showed up their contents, but threw the surrounding houses into greater obscurity. Few people were visible; and none of the quaint costumes one might expect to find so far up from the more civilised and accessible portions of Holland. I wandered about, and got out of my latitude, and lost my bearings to all intents and purposes. In vain I was directed to turn three times to the right and five to the left, and then describe a circle: it always ended in coming back to the same point. At last, in some mysterious manner, the silken clue to this labyrinth of streets was put into my hand, and I soon found myself on the drawbridge facing the inn.

The Zwarte Water looked cold and black. A barge was moored a few yards off, and the darkness and silence on board announced it deserted, or its occupants slumbering. Probably they were in some café near at hand, drinking beer and harmlessly passing away an hour at cards, or dominoes, or billiards, or whatever may be the national and popular game of this people. Had I waited, and, been gifted with Miss Pecksniff's sharp vision, I might perhaps have seen them coming round the corner on their way to a well-earned repose. But the old tower struck out the hour—ten: an hour that sounded weird and ghostly in this out-of-the-world capital. I gazed into the black water until I fancied strange faces and phantoms with grinning mouths and glowing eyes were rising to its surface and tempting me to join them in their spirit world. With a half shudder I looked round. Stillness reigned; gloom and darkness. A light gleamed here and there in the windows of the inn, some hundred feet off, but elsewhere the curfew seemed long to have tolled the knell of parting day. The simple folk all slumbered and slept: laying in a fresh stock of energy against the rising of the sun. Happy they—as it seemed by strange contrast—who were able to go to roost with the fowls and rise with the dawn. They see the new-born day in the first flush of youth, before the mists have risen to rub the bloom off earth and trees and sky. These early moments are clothed with a charm that gilds none of the after hours.

So with the last vibration, when the air had again settled down to stillness, I gave up gazing into the Zwarte Water, which somehow seemed to send forth a certain dangerous fascination, and, crossing the square, sought the refuge of the inn. A room comfortable and quiet; where, if so inclined, I could still trace the line of the Zwarte Water from the windows; or contemplate the great tower that reared its head above the houses like a grim goblin guarding the town. But I preferred, by the light of a lamp as brilliant and modern as if it had come straight from London, taking up

my parable to absent friends from the point at which it had ceased the previous night. There was no ecclesiastical atmosphere about Zwolle, as about Utrecht; but, to counterbalance, from this far-away place your words must be read with the feeling and impression one devotes to a favourite author of the last century. Eleven o'clock, and from the four quarters of the tower a watchman blew a loud and melancholy horn, announcing to the slumbering inhabitants that all was safe: nor fire, water, nor deadly foe threatened the peace of the town. Then in slow and solemn strokes boomed forth the hour. So it went on throughout the night. But it was a different and more bearable experience than the crashing chimes of Amsterdam. Distance now lent enchantment to the sound. It was even possible to sleep through this noise; or at least to turn round with a comfortable feeling of security for oneself and of pity for the horn-blower; and, like the sluggard, slumber again.

The next morning at breakfast I watched from the windows the loading of the barge which had interested me so much in the dark hours. But the romance of night, the mystery of darkness, which for some reason appeals so strongly to the imagination, and excites it to so high a pitch, was absent. Barge and men in the broad daylight hours seemed invested with a very prosaic interest. They were hard at work, loading wood. Their task ended, they loosed their moorings, the bridge was swung open, the toll was dropped into the little leathern pocket at the end of the fishing-rod, and away they went. I saw them no more.

Breakfast over, I started at once for the post-office—that ever delightful walk with the expectation of receiving home letters at the end: for which, when abroad, and especially when removed from civilisation, one seems to long with the longing of a thirsty soul in a dry land. The possibilities of chances and changes assail the too vivid imagination in a very unreasonable manner: and yet who—the most matter-of-fact amongst us—is quite free from the feeling, unless he possesses a heart of steel and a mind altogether devoid of fancy?

Somehow we all seem to know our way as by instinct to the post-office. A kindly genius leads onward. It was found this morning easily enough: in a square shaded by trees, noisy and gay with butter and vegetable women, presiding over their stalls and retailing amidst themselves a week's gossip. A lively scene. One woman, in a picturesque costume and rich jewellery that bespoke a thrifty housewife, held up, as I passed, a fine capon: a wonderful creature even for a land more or less famous for the cattle of Pharaoh's fat kind. In full guttural Dutch patois, accompanied by a killing flash from a bright brown eye, she asked me if I would not be her first customer. Those bright eyes had nearly conquered. Like a weak Briton I had almost bought the fowl—which must have enriched my landlord's larder in lieu of other destination—when the fact of having to carry it through the town proved a more powerful

appeal to that sense of the ridiculous few of us are without, than did the bright eyes to the subduing of a reason that is a less universal gift. With a laugh at my folly, in which the temptress fairly joined, I left the bird to the possession of a happy Dutch vrouw who came up at the instant. The price, however, had to be sensibly abated. For myself, I went off to the post-office, received my letters, and felt in love and charity with all mankind.

Performing a circuitous journey on my way back to the hotel, I passed through the Sassenpoort; the quaintest building in Zwolle. An old gateway with pointed turrets; the only remaining gateway out of nine that were once the glory of the town. The building looks solid, yet antiquated and curious to the last degree, with a pointed archway, four towers, with their loopholes or small windows, surmounted by pepperbox turrets, and the body of the structure crowned by a slanting roof, a clock tower with bells, and an old weathercock, who this morning pointed for a westerly wind. There was something more than ordinarily dignified about the old gateway, partly derived from the style of its architecture, partly from its solid age, which seemed at once to have gained the beauties of time and defied its ravages. In walking through Zwolle you quickly discover that very few of its houses are old and quaint like those, for instance, of Hoorn. The town consequently produces a very different impression upon you. It is only in looking up at an old gateway such as the Sassenpoort that you forget the present and lose yourself in recollections and customs and dreams of the past.

At the hotel, according to arrangement, a carriage was in waiting to drive me to Kampen. Away we started. The morning, by no means warm, in spite of the west wind, threatened rain. The old coachman, a sleepy individual who drove his lean quadruped at mourning pace, was enveloped in a fur cloak that might have done duty in the wilds of Siberia. He trotted over the bridge, turned sharply to the left, and very quickly had put all houses behind us. The drive was long and dreary. At first the road was lined on either side with a somewhat fine row of trees, and a dyke beyond. Dykes, indeed, were everywhere, and occasional windmills for draining the land, which here is particularly marshy. At intervals we passed a roadside farmhouse; and ranged against the outside walls, placed there to dry, row above row in the form of a triangle, were the most perfect and beautiful brass pails and pans imaginable. Such objects are never seen in England. Our dairies are furnished with plain earthenware pans and wooden buckets that possess no other recommendation than that of cleanliness; whilst those in Holland are really artistic, worthy of a painter's time and attention. A Dutch vrouw takes as much pride in the articles of her dairy as an English fanatic (if the term may be allowed) gives to a collection of old china.

The drive came to an end at last. The steeples of Kampen

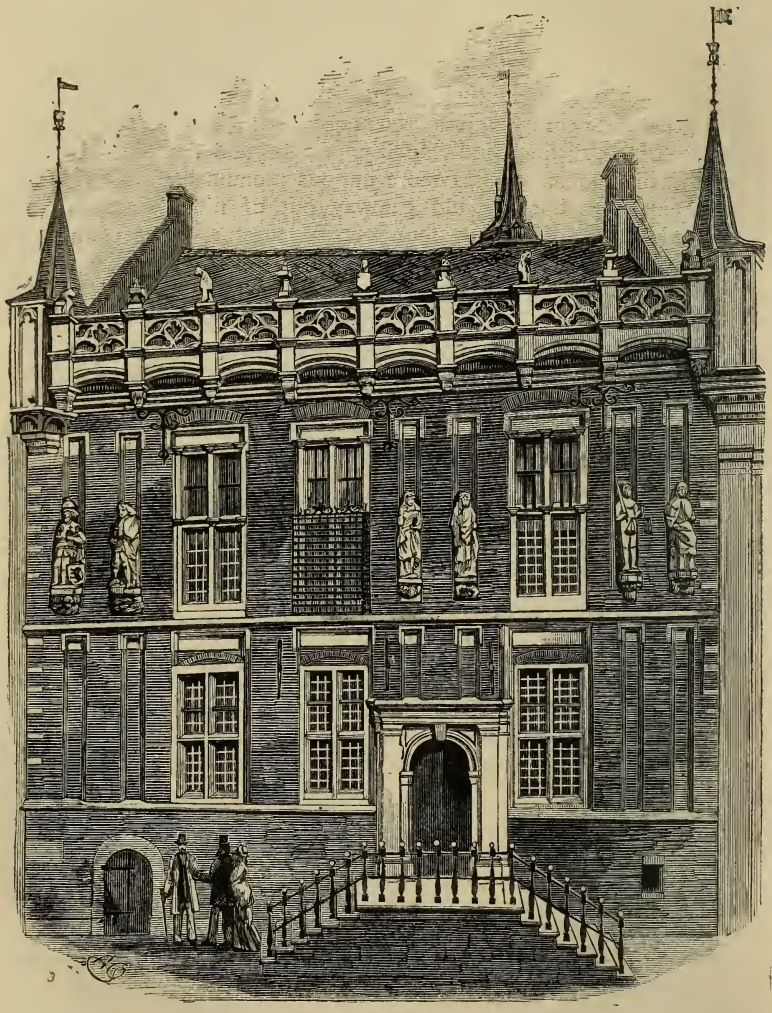
declared themselves. A sharp turn to the left, and we passed on to the fine but too narrow suspension bridge spanning the Yssel. In a few moments the carriage had put up at the inn, and I found myself at large in the streets of the little town.

Kampen is built near the mouth of the Yssel. It is a seaport of the Zuyder Zee, but at some little distance from its shores. The town does not possess the age of Hoorn, its deadness or quaintness. Yet it is quaint undoubtedly; and though only dating back to the thirteenth century, gives you an idea of age, of a bygone history, of a distinct individuality, far beyond anything to be observed in Zwolle. It has more curious monuments, and whereas Zwolle possesses but one old gateway out of nine, Kampen has preserved whole and entire four out of seven. These gateways and the old town hall are its pride and attraction. The latter is one of the most curious and rare buildings in Holland: a Gothic structure, in itself sufficient repayment for a visit to Kampen. A portion of it was unhappily destroyed by fire, and that portion was rebuilt and forms the present town hall; but what remains of the old is complete in itself. The exterior of the house wore a cheerful, almost smiling aspect. Ancient mullioned windows with thick iron bars before some of them like cages; and between the windows sculptured figures of Charlemagne, Alexander, and some of the Virtues; stone carvings perhaps more quaint than beautiful. The roof was slanting, and, gazing up from below, a portion of it was hidden by beautiful Gothic, crumbling tracery, which with its griffins gave a romantic and refined finish to this side of the building. At either end was a small turret surmounted by a huge vane, and behind might be observed the upper portion of the bell tower.

This old town hall was a corner building, and the side was as peculiar, though not as rich in decoration, as the front. Its high pointed roof terminated in a somewhat heavy chimney. But the bell tower could be seen here, a portion of, yet standing out from the main edifice.

Strange and interesting as was the exterior of this town hall, the interior was yet more so. A short flight of stone steps led to the entrance. Then up an old staircase to the first floor, where you entered a room the like of which I had never seen in Europe, and do not expect to see again. It was a small room; nothing in its size could impose or strike upon the visitor with awe. The first impression was one of solemn gloom, too deep to take in all the points at a glance on first coming out from the broad daylight. The walls were panelled with carved oak dark with age. Around the walls seats were fitted in after the manner of stalls, richly sculptured. The chimney, occupying almost one side of the chamber, was heavy and massive, especially grand and beautiful in its magnificent workmanship, dating back to the year 1543. Beside it, in the farther corner, was an immense seat surmounted by a canopy of carved wood

before which, on wood of equal beauty, rested a plain desk. Three steps led up to this seat, which might indeed be called a seat of judgment. The ceiling was arched and vaulted in sculptured wood



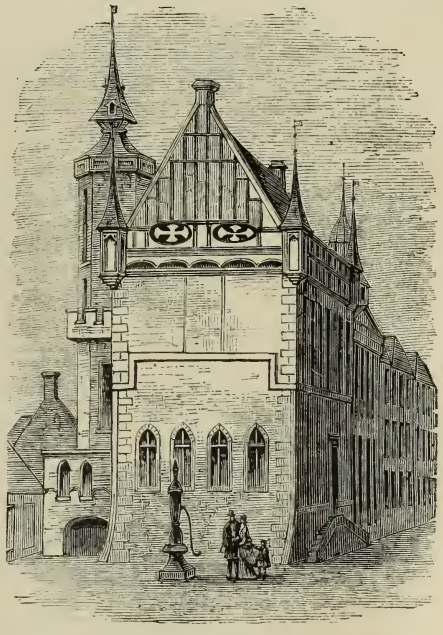
TOWN HALL, KAMPEN.

of matchless elegance, the black relieved by flowers picked out with gold, from which long since all brilliancy had faded.

The entire aspect of the room was solemn and gloomy; portentous. The mind felt charmed and delighted, yet almost overweighted. It was a room fitted for state secrets; for weighty counsels on which

might depend the fate of an empire; where trials for treason might be held and extreme sentences delivered. A judge, in that grand seat, might put on a black cap and be in perfect harmony with his surroundings. A hapless prisoner would unconsciously gather from its aspect that his doom was sealed. A room that might have been fitted for the secret councils of a Spanish Inquisition. Under such circumstances its sombre gloom would be turned into something cold and savage, influencing the minds of those already too fearfully inclined.

When at length I turned my back upon it, I felt that Kampen, in comparison with this, would possess little that was interesting. Next came the gateways; and especially the Brœderspoort, or Brothers' Gate, and the Cellebrœderspoort; the latter named after an order of monks, who possessed all things in common, and appear to have died out in common, as they have left no representatives behind them. The quaintness and originality of their architecture was at once observable. The Cellebrœderspoort was the more ancient of the two; and though dating back to the commencement of the sixteenth century, or the close of the fifteenth, was in a state of perfect preservation. A high pointed roof, with three small windows, which looked out upon the bridge and the water and the gardens adorning this outskirt of Kampen, converted by its inhabitants into a delightful park or promenade. On either side the roof towers kept guard, surmounted by steeples which raised themselves far above it, terminated by thin rods of iron holding a small ball of the same metal, possibly lightning-conductors. At intervals in the narrowing spires were small windows or loopholes, which gave a keen scrutiny over the town and surrounding country. Below the roof in the massive stonework were three windows belonging to inhabited rooms: and then came the slightly pointed archway which concluded this beautiful structure. The Brœderspoort, as quaint in outline, was rougher in detail and less beautiful. But one was not disposed to quarrel with these



Town Hall, Kampen (Side View).

wonderful old buildings for possessing more or less of beauty. They are as rare to meet as they are acceptable. Kampen is happy and fortunate in their possession; and in gazing upon them the traveller feels himself in an unknown, almost a new world. They had not the venerable dignity of the Sassenpoort of Zwolle, but on the whole, taken in conjunction with their surroundings, they were much more curious and impressive.

Not only the gates of Kampen, but its people, made one feel in a strange land. More than in any other town, Hoorn excepted, I was the subject of remark and attention from its inhabitants. The advent of a visitor is apparently a rare event amongst them, and as such must not be passed over in silence. So, wandering through the long streets (in this respect Kampen seemed to be of a consumptive tendency, all length and no breadth), I found myself frequently the subject of surprise, admiration, or suspicion, whichever it might be, from a rapidly increasing group at every convenient corner or otherwise quiet thoroughfare.

The two churches of St. Mary and St. Nicholas, at opposite ends of the town, large and fine, dated from the fourteenth century. But in praising the churches of Holland, it must be, for the most part, with a decided reservation. The church of St. Nicholas is a building of great size and high vaulted roofs and large windows, with a pulpit of carved stone that would be beautiful were it not ruined by paint. How much this Dutch mania is to be deplored! Exquisite carvings; the tone of antiquity; fine organs; beautiful tracery; whenever they can daub over a coat of coarse colouring, there too often it is to be found. St. Nicholas was no exception to the rule. I had some difficulty in obtaining entrance. No one seemed to know where the sacristan lived. At last a little old woman, bent and shrivelled with age, surely the female counterpart of the wandering Jew, tottered up from her seat and put me in the right way.

Kampen is the only town in Holland whose inhabitants live free of taxes. Its bygone richness and prosperity were such as to relieve its inhabitants from the penalties of taxation for ever. It is consequently a cheap place to live in, much resorted to by people of small incomes. Its chief trade is in timber. But its streets, like so many of the streets in these out-of-the-world places, are quiet and almost deserted.

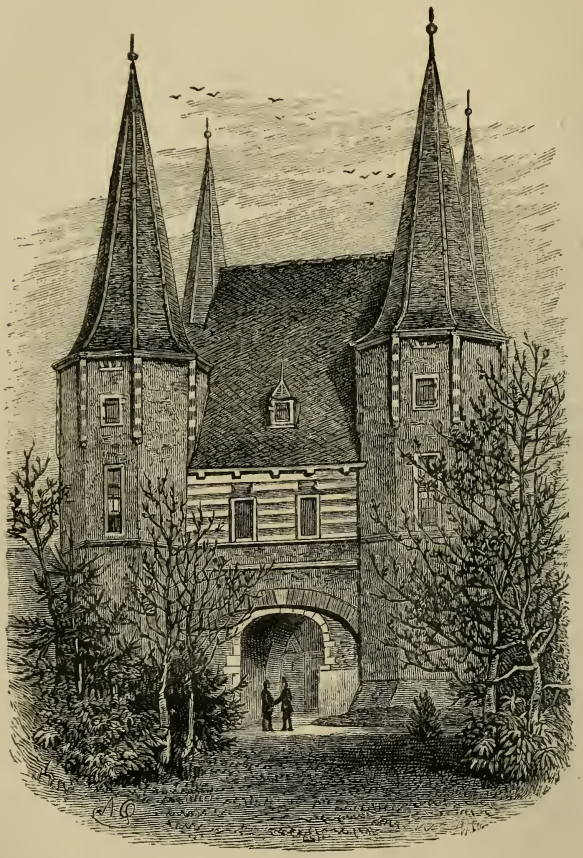
Finally I returned to the inn, summoned the coachman, and whilst he was making ready, indulged in the luxury of a cup of coffee. Then we started on our return journey. Past the old town hall, on which I had bestowed a last fond look; over the suspension bridge, and fairly on the way to Zwolle. The town from this point looked quaint enough. The waters of the Yssel, a broad stream, washed its foundations. Upon its banks rose curious old gateways, walls, and houses; above them reared the pointed steeples of churches, and

town halls, and more gateways. The old place seemed to be slumbering away its life, calm and tranquil as the waters of the stream on which it was built. Then all this was left behind us. Before us a long, straight road; dykes, cattle, and windmills; trees, and cultivated fields, and green pastures. Across the meadows there, over the heads of the trees and the hedges, a solitary stork winging its flight. Was it a widower; a "lone, lorn creetur," like Mrs. Gummidge? or had it gone through the divorce court? or was it nothing better than an eccentric old bachelor?—for I suppose they have all these vicissitudes in the bird kingdom, or things are unequally divided. It was soon out of sight, and we continued our solitary way through this deserted country.

The next morning, indefatigable in my researches, I started early on the expedition I had most at heart: the cemetery where I hoped to find the remains of the monastery so long occupied by Thomas à Kempis, and the grave of the saint himself. The same driver and horse were placed at my disposal—as though Zwolle could produce none other. The man looked seventy, and it was difficult to tell whether he or the quadruped was the elder. I had made inquiries of mine host at the inn concerning Thomas à Kempis. He knew nothing of the grave and had never heard of the saint. As for a monastery, or the ruins of one, this must be a myth. There was a cemetery, certainly, where the rich were buried; it was on rising ground, but was nothing to look at. After digging a foot or so on flat ground you came to water; so the rising ground was kept for the rich, and the flat fell to the poor. This did not seem a very pleasant state of things. I thought little of the landlord's ignorance, knowing that very often the nearer an object is to the eye the less it will be seen. Mine host evidently put me down as an eccentric Englishman with a mania for cemeteries and antediluvian horses; and possibly delivered to the coachman a quiet warning to look after my safety.

We had about three-quarters of an hour's drive before us; a portion of it on the road we had travelled yesterday to Kampen. When at length we turned aside it was not to improve the prospect. Nothing more dreary and desolate could be conceived. We appeared, indeed, to be journeying to life's end—the graveyard. Not one person did we pass, no sign of name or local habitation. The ground was marshy and uncultivated. A rough road, an ascent, a surrounding bear-garden, and the driver announced "here we were." We were indeed. He had stopped at the door of a small house or cottage. I dismounted from the ramshackle vehicle, which must have come into the world at least a generation before the horse, and entered. From the woman's manner I do not think she had seen a strange face for at least five years. In absence of mind I addressed her in an unknown tongue. "Could she direct me to the grave of Thomas à Kempis?" She replied with intelligent alacrity, sped across the room, swung back the door of a cupboard, and disclosed a list of

a dozen beverages, any of which she would be happy to produce. If not gifted with a calm and equable temperament, edifying to contemplate, I might be tempted to lose patience at the manner in which, go where you will, the people seem to think it one's first and last duty to drink and drink again. I explained my wants more fully to the

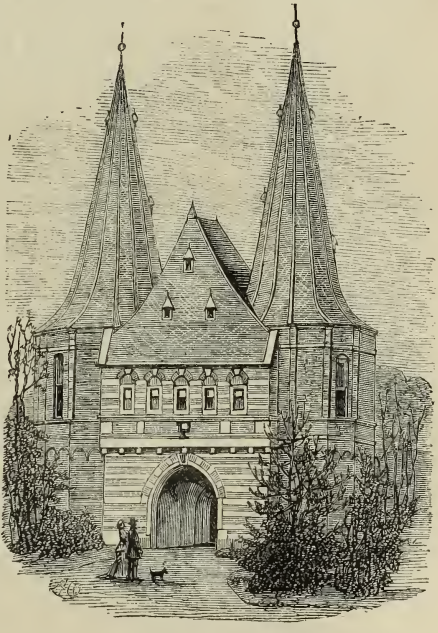


BRŒLERSPOORT.

vrouw. This time she understood, and, opening an inner door, beckoned mysteriously for me to enter. I began to wonder whether the saint's grave was enclosed here, after the manner of Peter the Great's house at Zaandam. The woman pointed to an engraving upon the wall. That she assured me was all I should find of Thomas à Kempis. It was a small, roughly-executed, but quaint woodcut. In the midst of a field sat the saint, bald-headed, in monk's dress. His face was long and narrow, and in this respect reminded one of the streets of Kampen. A large book lay on his knees, which might be

either a copy of the Scriptures or the bound parchments of his own manuscript, at the fancy of the gazer. His hands reposed upon the open volume, his eyes sought the clouds. In the background, considerably smaller than the saint, was his monastery, and the church, with a little pointed steeple. A wall, comically drawn, enclosed the whole.

I gazed in bewilderment. The woman took it for admiration, and joined me with clasped hands. I turned to her in despair. Where were the remains of the monastery? the grave of the saint? She laughed a peculiar little laugh; such a laugh as we sometimes give to a child whose intelligence has not yet fully developed. There had been no remains for ages and ages, she affirmed; not one brick upon another; not even a trace of any foundation. As for a grave, she had never heard of one. There was the cemetery — pointing to a short distance, where, on rising ground, enclosed in a hedge, the "turf heaved in many a mouldering heap"— I might search as much as I liked. But I saw that the woman thought me not quite right in my mind, and was prepared to act on the defensive. I thanked her for her civility; and as I left the cottage she quietly closed the door, and shot the bolt, and heaved a sigh of relief. As the coachman lumbered round to the cemetery I looked back. She was watching me with a pale face in which alarm had given place to pity. I was very soon amongst the graves, looking round and about. As the woman had said, there was nowhere the slightest trace of a monastery. All had long since passed away. Monks, and convent, and saint; nothing to tell of what had been, but a remembrance or tradition; and a little book that has passed into a household word in almost every known and civilised tongue.



CELLEBRŒDERSPOORT.

And for the grave? With a feeling of severe disappointment, of righteous anger against those "authorities," verbal and written, who had misled me, I recognised no sign of what I had come to see. Could it be one of those nameless and neglected heaps, with no

mark to show that the body of a saint of the earth, greater amongst mankind than the most illustrious hero or the founder of a dynasty, lay beneath, awaiting in rest and peace the last trumpet sound? I thought not. I wandered to the farther end of the graveyard, where just beyond its confines a modern schoolhouse reared its head. A young Dutchman was leaning from an open window, and, catching sight of me, came out quickly. He had a fancy for airing his French, which he spoke wonderfully well considering the few advantages he possessed. He informed me that he was studying to become a professor: hoped to pass his examinations, go out into the world, and make his way among his fellows. There was something about him that told me he would succeed in doing it. I asked him about the monastery and the grave. He said I was not the first who had gone up there in a vain hope. A monastery had once existed, it was true, but all traces had long disappeared. He could not even point out the precise spot on which it stood. So with the grave. Thomas à Kempis *had* been buried there once upon a time; but ages ago his bones were removed to his birthplace, Kempen, a small town on the lower Rhine. Many a time perplexities had arisen by confusing together the two names, Kampen and Kempen.

The young fellow was evidently delighted to have some one to talk to from the outer world. He seemed to hunger to get into that world. What hopes was he cherishing of its pleasures or glories: that, as a rule, when attained, only crumble to ashes or turn to bitterness in the mouth? I talked long with him, and was surprised to find how well up he was in literature and many other things one would have thought altogether beyond his reach. He warmed, and grew quite excited, and seemed as pleased with the interview as if I had brought him the pledge of a successful examination, or an appointment to a professor's chair in the great world he longed to enter. He meant to go back to his studies, his hard solitary life, more earnest and determined than ever. And I left him with a feeling that if I had not found what I came for, my long dull drive had not been quite useless. To cheer the heart and brace up the reins of one struggling against poverty, or fate, or adverse circumstances, especially when the task comes unexpectedly, reflects back a certain lightness of spirit that bears its own reward, and keeps the sympathies from growing rusty, or perhaps dying out altogether.

A drive back to Zwolle; a hasty lunch at the inn; a quick drive to the station in the rattling omnibus, that tore through the streets to the utter terror of an antiquated spinster-passenger, who swayed from side to side, and shrieked, and became hysterical, and had to be assisted into the waiting-room: and I found myself on the road to Friesland.

CHARLES W. WOOD.

BERTHA'S SPINNING-WHEEL.

Frau Bertha sits the livelong day
And turns her spinning-wheel ;
She says, "I spin the hours away,
And wind them on my reel ;"
Frau Bertha's spindle seldom stands,
Though never yarn is in her hands.

The children loiter by her door,
And watch her fingers go ;
Her busy treadle on the floor,
Her voice down-dropping low
In murmurs from the poor, pale lips,
Once scarlet ripe, like mellowed hips.

She murmurs softly in the air,
"Mein Carl, and lieber Mann !
Their threads are lost, those threads so fair,
The golden ones that ran
Through all my life in far-off years,
Now blurred with rain of blood and tears.

"I lost them both at once—those two ;
They rode with our Crown Prince,
My Hans and Carl, so brave and true,
Both gone :—and always since
This heart has had no peace for pain,
Because two threads broke in my brain.

"'Twas just before the French took flight
(I'll not forget that sign !)
I heard the death-watch in the night
And marked the hour for mine
With a red cross, deep, burning red,
A cross to mind me of my dead.

"I seek, and strive, and fail to find
A thread of flax to spin ;
There is no yarn for me to wind,
My grave-sheet to begin,
And yet I turn the wheel all day,
And spin my weary hours away."

* * * * *

So summers wane and winters pass,
So Spring comes after Fall,
And gold cups flourish in the grass,
And bindweeds on the wall,
And still Frau Bertha turns her wheel
With never yarn upon the reel.

JANE DIXON.

ONE WOMAN'S TREACHERY.

"WHEN the sun sets, to-morrow, be at the stile, by the cross road."

The people were pouring out of St. James's Church; the chief church of the large town of Richborough. The organist was playing some sad, fitful chords, something from the Messiah; and under cover of their melting sweetness, the audacious whisperer, a young and handsome man, had bent forward to make this appointment.

The two young ladies, to one of whom he had spoken, were walking down the aisle side by side. Dorothy Stevens, for whom the whisper was undoubtedly intended, glanced up a mute look of assent through her golden curls. But it chanced that the other lady heard it too, for her ears were subtle, and a dark cloud drifted over the sunshine of her face; her little hand clenched itself spasmodically under the rich lace of her shawl. She fell back a step, and glanced coldly into the gentleman's face. He was holding his hat in his gloved hand, and he bowed ceremoniously as his eyes met hers. At least, as ceremoniously as one can bow, coming out of church.

"Good morning, Miss Lawrence," he said, distantly; and just then they emerged from the aisle to the vestibule. Miss Lawrence held out a tiny hand, which he could not do otherwise than take.

He released it immediately, notwithstanding her clinging touch, but the little hand was not to be so repulsed. It fluttered to his arm, and rested there, just one finger being on the coat cuff.

"There is such a throng," murmured the young lady in an entreating tone of apology; "and people never mind where they put their feet. I am sure my flounces will be in rags."

Mr. Hastings perhaps anathematized first the crowd and next the perishable flounces: but what could he do, save take the girl under his wing? Dorothy looked back and saw him coming down the steps with the beautiful heiress hanging on his arm in that frightened, appealing, clinging manner, which she knew so well how to put on. But Dorothy only smiled and nodded brightly: she felt perfectly secure in the love of Dean Hastings, after that sweet whisper.

Each of these three people, when once in the open air, went their way homeward in the mellow and bright October sunshine. But not before Miss Lawrence had detained Dean Hastings for a chat.

"Are you particularly engaged this afternoon, Mr. Hastings?"

"Yes, I am. I am going out of town at once to see a sick friend, and shall not be back before nine o'clock."

"Nine o'clock?" she repeated, musingly. "Well, that will be time enough. Papa wishes to see you, if you can call."

"But I—oh, very well," broke off Mr. Hastings. "Tell him, if you please, that I will endeavour to come."

Within the shade of her own chamber, Annabella Lawrence threw off her hat, and grasped at the lace collar around her throat as if it were choking her. She paced up and down; then, pausing before the pier-glass, she bent forward and looked at herself long and earnestly. Her dark hair was silky, her black eyes flashed fire.

"Youth and beauty," she murmured. "It is said that youth and beauty will work wonders for their possessor. But what have they done for me? They cannot win for me the love I need; the love he gives to that pale, spiritless working-girl. Ah! it makes me sick to think of her! I *know* he cares for her—and does he think I do not see that he cares not for me? It is her fault. But for her, he would turn to me and love me. Oh, Dean, Dean, I love you! Why do you not see it?—or do you see it, and yet will not respond to it?"

She threw her arms up with a passionate gesture of sorrow: and then bent her head on her hands in pain.

"If I find—if I find," she resumed, lifting her pale face, "that he cares for her seriously—that he neglects me for her, I swear that both shall suffer—he as well as she. I—swear—it!"

Anything more vindictive than the tone of her emphatic words, than the expression of her pale face, was never seen or heard. Bella Lawrence was not a girl to be crossed lightly. Her face, sufficiently beautiful when she was at rest, or in her tender moods, was half diabolical now. Her great dark eyes flashed fiercely, a hot flush burned on her soft, round, olive cheeks, and through her full red lips her sharp-pointed white teeth gleamed craftily. It was no fable that in her school-days she had been nicknamed "the Cat," and that her companions had given her full credit for all a cat's spiteful nature when angered. She and Dorothy Stevens had been educated at the same school: the one was a rich heiress, the other was to be only a governess. Dora was in a family now, and Miss Lawrence condescended to speak to her now and then when they met.

Bella walked to the window, and stood looking thoughtfully out. What a lovely scene it was! The house stood on the outskirts of the town; hill and vale lay stretched out before her, and waving woodlands tinted with autumn's unrivalled colours. Along the line of the river, spires and clustered chimneys marked the site of her father's factories —mile-stones on the road to wealth. "It is all mine," she murmured. "It will be mine in time, and I would give it all to him with this"—lifting her hand. "I would give it to him, and he rejects it."

Yes: if Miss Lawrence could read signs, Dean Hastings would reject her hand were it offered him. But she was not sure; not quite. Again her quick mood changed. The flush died out of her cheeks, and tears crowded into her proud, dark eyes. "Dean, Dean, I would give you the tenderest, truest love a woman ever proffered. Oh, why do you despise it?"

And yet, who was Dean Hastings? Nobody. He was a gentleman by birth, it's true, but he had no means save what he earned as one of the chief clerks in this very factory—that of Lawrence and Lawrence. His cousin was a baronet in an adjoining county; and Dean was in the best society that Richborough afforded.

"So absurd, so incongruous," thought Bella, "for him to notice that stupid governess!—Who's that?" she rather sharply cried out as a tap was heard at the door. "Oh, what do you want, Pauline?"

The lunch waited. So Miss Lawrence went down with finger on lip. Her mind was hard at work.

Do you think the father of all wickedness is in league with such of his children as would forward his evil designs on earth? Does he make the way smooth for them when they abandon themselves to working out their fierce passions of hatred and revenge? Our forefathers used to believe in these alliances of earth and the devil; and we are at times fain to believe that if the devil be not in league against us, the good angel who we love to think watches over us is at times far off—very, very far.

The clock was striking nine that night when Dean Hastings was shown in. Bella received him in a small favourite apartment that she often sat in, and liked best. The fittings were of pink silk and lace, the ornaments scattered about it were rarely beautiful. Mr. Lawrence was out. For that little command of her father's, transmitted to Dean in the morning, had been an invented fable of her own.

She held out her hand to him, and bade him take a chair near her. His handsome eyes were fixed deferentially on her face as he obeyed: but there was no warmth in them; there was not one shadow of tenderness towards her in his manner. Bella's heart grew faint and her lips cold: but still she hoped against hope; she would not give up all without a struggle. This night should decide the uncertainty; leave her to happiness or to despair.

The interview lasted about half an hour: and what passed between them was never known. Probably, in her desperation, Annabella Lawrence let him gather unmistakably that her love was his—and she did love him with all the terrible passion of her fierce nature: and he on his side may have allowed her to see that he could not accept it. He may even have hinted to her that his true affections were given to Miss Stevens, the poor girl-governess, so unjustifiably despised by the great heiress. Any way, when Dean Hastings quitted the rich merchant's house that night, Bella knew that her hopes of happiness were over, that despair had set in. She resolved to live henceforth only for revenge.

Annabella had seen a good deal of Mr. Hastings. It cannot be denied that he paid her some attention; that he met her advances, if not half way, at least a part of it. But he never cast a thought to anything serious; that great heiress, his master's daughter, was not for him to aspire to; and it was only lately, when he had begun

to detect somewhat of her true feelings for him, that he had drawn in, and become cold to her with a purpose. Between that time and this, he had met Dorothy Stevens; and learnt to love her. And now, in her bitter heart, Miss Lawrence was striving to hate him as much as she had loved him. She believed he had deliberately played her false: and, as Shakespeare tells us, Hell has no fury like a woman scorned.

But she did him injustice there. Mr. Hastings had never felt love for her, or sought to make her think he did. Of an extremely modest, un-self-asserting nature, good-looking though he was, he had deemed that Miss Lawrence had but flirted with him, *amused* herself with him, just as she did with a host of other young men: and so the misapprehension had gone on, and was bringing trouble in its train.

Her hair pushed back, her heart beating with all its tumultuous and varied passions, Bella sat on after Mr. Hastings left. The loud opening and closing of the street door, and a swift footstep on the stairs, aroused her. It was her cousin who entered, one Richard Lawrence; a young man of nine-and-twenty, who lived with them. He had a small share in the business, and he hoped, by dint of playing his cards well, to succeed to it after Mr. Lawrence.

Mr. Richard also hoped to succeed to something else—Miss Lawrence. He did not love her; but he did love her money, for the ruling passion of his heart was avarice. If he loved one person more than another, it was pretty Dora Stevens; her golden hair and sweet blue eyes were wont to haunt him as he sat in the counting-house over his account-books. But he said nothing to her, and meant nothing: a poor governess could never be the wife for him: he wanted one endowed with the mines of Golconda.

He and his cousin Bella understood one another. That is, *she* understood *him*. She saw that he wanted her for his wife on account of her money; she knew how abject (with this aim in view) a slave he was to her, how he bent before all her whims and caprices, and that she could turn him round her little finger. On his part, he suspected her fancy for Dean Hastings; *fancy*, he thought it, nothing more; but he was outrageously jealous of that, and there were moments when he wished he could see that gentleman hanging on the nearest tree; ay, and could have helped to hang him.

Richard Lawrence did not love Mr. Hastings on his own score. He was a little West Indian fellow, with a dark face and ungenial manner: whereas Hastings was one of the best-looking of men, and charmed everybody; the result being that while the one was courted in society, the other often found the cold shoulder turned upon him. And thus Richard Lawrence was prime for any little bit of by-play against Hastings that might be proposed to him. Not that he expected any such proposal; nothing could be farther from his thoughts. It came, nevertheless.

"Why—what is the matter, Annabella?"

It was the face of his cousin that called forth the exclamation Bella passed her soft cambric handkerchief across her brow.

"It's that wretched Hastings. He has been here insulting me."

"What!" cried Richard, angrily rising.

And Miss Bella Lawrence entered upon a graphic tale. Some little truth there was in it, but the greater portion was the concoction of her own fertile brain. Hastings had dared to talk of love to her, she hinted, while he had unconsciously betrayed that he was playing fast and loose with Dora Stevens—villain that he was. And there was nothing for it but his being sent instantly out of Richborough.

"Instantly!" exclaimed Richard, lifting his head. "But, Bella, I don't think he can be spared."

"As you please, Dick. I do care for him a little—and perhaps you know that I do. Let him remain here, and I won't answer for what may happen. Some fine morning you and papa may find he has run away with me. He is audacious enough for that, or anything else; and women like audacity in men, you know."

Richard Lawrence knitted his brows.

"As to that governess girl, he no doubt fully intends to kidnap *her*, whether or not; she's nobody: provided he can keep the knowledge of it from me. Wives don't care to hear of these things, you see. I have sometimes thought you liked the girl a little bit yourself, Richard."

"She's a nice, pleasant little girl enough," said Richard. "Honest as the day, and worthy."

"And friendless," added Bella, with quite a display of benevolent feeling. "Well, Richard, for her sake you should banish him."

"Let me think it out," said Richard. "I hardly see how it is to be done. Your father leaves a great deal of control to me, but he does not leave all. And—and how long is he to go for?"

"For good," answered Bella, passionately. "As I cannot have him, *she* shall not," she added to herself; and her face for the moment wore the fierceness of a tiger's. "Why can't you send him out to our cotton plantations in Barbadoes, Richard?"

"Because—because—I don't know why. It has never been thought of, Bella; he has been too useful where he is."

"Has anyone gone out to take the place of the chief clerk there, who died?"

"Not yet. Proctor is partly promised it."

Their eyes met. Proctor was the clerk immediately under Hastings: why not substitute the one for the other? It was the question that Richard was reading in her fixed look.

"*I* would; I'd be glad to be rid of the fellow," said Richard, answering the gaze. "But these appointments do not lie with me. Your father has always made them. Hush! here he comes."

Mr. Lawrence came in slowly. In walking across the room to an easy chair, Bella saw that he limped.

"Are you not well, papa?"

"Anything but that, I am afraid, my dear. I am in for a fit of the gout again, unless I greatly mistake. My foot has given me twinges all day; and now I can hardly bear it. Remember one thing, Richard: if I do get laid up, you must not bother me as you did last time, bringing all sorts of trifles to me—you must act for yourself. You are as capable as I am."

A faint sound of exultation, suppressed instantly, broke from Bella's lips. This threatened illness, this extension of power to Richard, seemed to be happening on purpose.

Surely the devil did appear to be in league with these good people! For with the morning Mr. Lawrence was plunged deep into an agonising fit of the gout, could not leave his bed, and his servants were running all over Richborough for the most able physicians.

"Is that you, Mr. Hastings? Come here."

The speaker was Richard Lawrence. He sat in the post of honour in the counting-house; and Dean, as he entered, in obedience to the mandate, saw it with some surprise; for that place belonged only to the head and chief.

"You are a little late this morning."

"I am; it is a quarter past nine," replied Dean, good-humouredly. "Truth is, I got an important letter from an old college chum, and waited to answer it."

"Ay; one generally gets hindered at the wrong moment," observed Richard, with a pleasant smile. "I want you to get off to the station and take the ten o'clock train for Liverpool."

"Are you joking, Lawrence?"

"Not a bit of it. There's something wrong about the cargo of cotton just in, and you must go down to see about it. I should have gone myself but for the governor's illness. He is in for a fit of the gout again, and I must stay here to take his place."

Dean's face wore a blank look. "I wish I had known of this before."

"No doubt. I knew nothing about it till the letters got in this morning. The governor ordered me not to bother him with trifles, but I thought he ought to know something about this. 'As you can't go yourself,' said he, 'you must send Hastings down. Let him be off by the first train.' So you have no time to lose, you see."

Yes, his Satanic Majesty was certainly at work; for it was a positive fact that this news about the cargo of cotton was no fable, and that somebody had to go to Liverpool. Apart from any scheming, that somebody would probably have been Dean Hastings.

"When the sun sets be at the stile by the cross road."

It was this remembered sentence which was troubling his mind. Dora would go to the trysting place this evening, and go in

vain. Legitimate communication between herself and him was difficult at all times; but now he had no time to plan for or risk it. He glanced at the clock hanging over the desk. No; there was just time for him to dash home to his lodgings, tumble a few things into a portmanteau, and dash up to the station.

"Well, I suppose I must be off, then," said he. "What are my instructions?"

"I am writing them down for you."

Perhaps the word "writing" inspired Dean with an idea; or perhaps it was the little delay. Seizing paper and pen, he began a note to Dora. Then he hesitated, wondering how he should get it conveyed to her. His head seemed in a whirl—an unusual thing. Richard was writing fast, and the noise worried him. Scratch! scratch! Tick! tick! How that horrid clock hurried the minutes away. If he could only stop it. If he could only put out his hand and stop those bits of steel which were whirling his time away so fast. If he could only stop time itself. But no! Then another idea struck him; and he wrote rapidly and fastened up the note.

"Here," said Richard, handing him a folded paper, with some money. "Good luck to you, Hastings, and don't lose more time."

Richard seemed so gracious at that moment, that Dean was wondering whether he might not trust him with the note's delivery—the idea which had been floating with uncertainty through his mind. He looked at him, then glanced at the note, and looked again.

"Can I do anything for you?" asked Richard, blandly.

"Well, you can, Lawrence. I think I can trust you; though I am truly sorry to give you the trouble. You know the Calloways well—and Dorothy Stevens the governess: if you'd not mind calling there and putting this into her hand privately, I should be truly obliged."

"All right," said Richard, holding out his hand for the note.

"But you must let her have it before five o'clock this afternoon: that's indispensable."

Richard Lawrence nodded as he slipped the note into his pocket. And Dean Hastings made all speed for the train.

"Tell Mr. Lawrence how sorry I am that he is ill," he waited to say. "I hope he will soon be up again."

As to Richard, he found a minute to run to Miss Lawrence to report progress; and he showed her the note.

"I'll undertake that," said Bella. "Give it to me."

It used to be the fashion in novels of the Rosa Matilda school to represent young governesses as beings of incomparable beauty, safe to cause havoc in the heart of the house's eldest son and heir, and trouble to everybody else in consequence. Now this had absolutely happened in the case of Dorothy Stevens—although she could not boast of much beauty, save in her fine golden hair and

sweet blue eyes, and, it may be, in an innocent, confiding expression of countenance. Upon leaving school a situation had been found for her in the house of Mrs. Calloway: a rigid gentlewoman who boasted of high descent: to conduct the education of an only daughter. There was an only son as well, much older; twenty-one in fact; and he fell forthwith in love with the governess's pretty eyes and hair, after the alleged custom of these half-fledged youngsters. For a long while Mrs. Calloway suspected not the treason hatching in her son's heart: and she, confiding woman, continued to have Miss Stevens down to the drawing-room whenever she received evening guests; for the young lady, don't you see, was useful in the matter of playing and singing. Now and then Dorothy went out with them also; always when the daughter went. It was in these social evening gatherings that Mr. Hastings had seen her and learnt to love her; and she, poor girl, had no notion that anybody else did. Young Mr. Calloway, who was of a bashful, nervous temperament, kept his sentiments to himself, and did not annoy Dora: she only used to wonder why he stared at her so, and wished he would not. But one unlucky day he came to the desperate resolution of declaring his love, and penned a letter describing it. By some awkward mischance it fell into the possession of Mrs. Calloway instead of that of the governess; and a fine hubbub it caused. Dora, with earnest words and tearful eyes, protested that she had been in utter ignorance of the treason; and Mrs. Calloway, believing it in her secret heart, and not caring to part with her, kept her on: but she spoke to her in very severe terms, and candidly avowed she should exercise a rigid espionage over her in future. Dora agreed to that willingly. She was conscious of no ill: moreover, she was a friendless orphan, and feared to throw herself out of Mrs. Calloway's situation, lest she should not find another. Young Mr. Calloway was sent to the care of a clergyman at a distance, to read up for the Church, which he was to enter.

From that time, Dora found herself next kin to a prisoner. No more evening parties for her, no more social meetings. Mrs. Calloway even exercised the right (she said she possessed it) of opening her letters. Dora made no objection: she had never had but one letter since she entered the house, and that was from her former governess.

"Characters are much easier lost than regained amidst young people who have to earn their bread; and I consider it my duty to take care of yours," Mrs. Calloway observed to her by way of semi-apology; and Dora thought she was right (as no doubt she was) and thanked her kindly.

But all this put a great barrier between her and Mr. Hastings—at least, between their meetings. He thought it was Dora's fault, and a slight coolness had arisen in consequence. He felt inclined to be jealous of Mr. Charles Calloway, whose cause of banishment had

reached him, though not through Dora; and she had always been somewhat jealous of the great heiress, Miss Lawrence, with whom Mr. Hastings was so frequently seen. Still, she did trust him; she believed he loved her the best, and that when he was rich enough to marry he would make her his wife, as he one day told her he would. She, in her unpretentious ideas, thought he was quite rich enough now for anything; he had a large salary; but she and Mr. Hastings had been brought up with quite opposite notions on that point.

"When the sun sets be at the stile at the cross road," he had whispered in her ear. Evening came: and just as the sun was sinking below the western hills, Dora Stevens crossed Mrs. Calloway's garden to the copse beyond. For the trysting-place was but just behind Mrs. Calloway's boundary hedge. It was the first time Dora had deliberately met him, there or elsewhere; but a few evenings before, upon returning from a walk with Miss Calloway, they had accidentally encountered him at that spot, and stayed to talk. But Dora felt rather sorry now for the tacit assent she had given to his request; she gave it on the impulse of the moment; and she meant to tell him this evening that she could not meet him again, unless openly. It was not right to do so; neither would Mrs. Calloway allow it.

Nevertheless, despite of conscience, her heart was foolishly light as she sped along through the rustling leaves. She sang lightly some pretty silly nonsense about the lasses oh, which one Robert Burns wrote many years ago; wrote perchance in days when he too sat by the stile with his Highland Mary, and watched the birds hopping in the stubble, or the poppies nodding in the corn.

Dora, as she drew near the trysting-place, saw a shadow as of some one waiting near the stile, half hidden by the tangled branches of the copse, thick yet with leaves above and below.

No need to guess who it was, thought Dora, as she pulled her pretty hat lower on her face, and pushed back her prettier hair. How *good* of him to come so early and wait for her. Suddenly a voice spoke; not the voice that Dora had expected to hear.

"Dean, *is* it you? Have you come back?"

The voice was that of Miss Lawrence. It was Bella Lawrence who confronted Dora's pale, surprised face with a face quite as surprised and a great deal whiter—for it was a hazardous game she was playing—and with a perfectly studied confusion in her manner.

"Oh, I—I beg your pardon: I thought it was some one else," spoke Miss Lawrence, "some one who was to meet me here."

Dora paused. Hot tears of disappointment, which she could not suppress, flooded her eyes and dropped on her white cheeks.

"You here, Miss Lawrence?" she said, with struggling breath. "I don't understand. Did you speak of—of Mr. Hastings?" for a terrible fear had rushed into her mind: that it was Bella with whom he had sought to make the appointment, not herself.

"You must not betray me," whispered Bella, with the sweetest air of timidity imaginable. "You know my father is so proud, and Dean is only his clerk—but he loves me so—and we have so few opportunities to meet. You must not blame me, Miss Stevens, or think harshly of me for coming here at times to meet him. We shall not always have to be secret: when I am of age my late mother's money will be all my own, and then we can claim each other. He told me this morning he might be unable to keep his appointment, for he was going off on some business journey; but I —I hoped against hope, and came. And when I heard your footsteps, I thought they were his. Ah, me!"

Bella clasped her soft hands together in deprecation and bent her head on them as she spoke; and Dorothy Stevens listened with wide, wild eyes, while word following after word of that cruel lie fell on her quivering heart and smote her with a deathly cold pain, whose sting would cling to her. And the words were fitly chosen. The girl's allusion to her money cut keenly and closely: Dora bit her lips to keep from crying out then. She was only a poor governess; her only dowry her tender heart and sweet wild-rose face, and her great absorbing love for the man who was false to her.

Without one word she rose and turned to go, but Bella caught her by the arm and held her.

"Wait, please: how strange you are! Why do you look so wildly at me? You won't betray us; promise me that you will not betray us."

Dora drew proudly back. "I never betray. You have my word. I never broke it yet! I—I am sorry I came."

"Why *did* you come? This is so unfrequented a pathway."

A cry, in spite of herself, broke from the poor girl's lips. There are moments in life when anguish is stronger than we are, when reticence is overborne in its whirling torrent.

"Oh, Heaven, help me to bear this pain!" she sobbed; and down she fell in a heap on the grass, and bowed her fair golden head, and rocked herself back and forth, with wild hysterical sobs, in spite of those cruel, unrelenting eyes above her.

"What do you mean by this emotion?" asked Bella, sternly. "What is the matter? Is it possible—but no, it cannot be. Yet he has more than once hinted of a something that might come between him and me—some irksome, half-forgotten, passing amusement that clung to him like an incubus, though he was doing his best to shake it off. Is it you? Can it be you, you ridiculous girl?"

Dora rose up, her face white as death, and lifted a warning hand.

"Stop, Miss Lawrence. I will not hear another word. I do not stand between you and your false lover; yes, he *is* false, in spite of what he says to you, false and cowardly. You need not fear me. I will never come between him and you. You need not fear him. I have no money to keep him, and he is free from all he has said to

me. I will never speak to him again; never. You can tell him so from me. Never again."

With the last words Dora turned away, passed into the grounds, and ran swiftly home. But not very long had Miss Lawrence reached her father's house, before Dora was shown into her room. Pale, wild-eyed, a shawl wrapped about her, Dora put down a letter. A hasty, blotted, fiercely-written letter; a letter written in that passionate hour—oh, how cruelly, and likely, after it was received, to put all the wide world between her and her lover. For when girls are stung into madness, they do all kinds of incomprehensible things, never sparing those who have injured them.

"It is my renouncement!" Dora panted. "I thought I would bring it to you, and you would send it to him, as you know where he is gone. Bid him never answer it. Let him never in honour speak to me again—never look at me. Fare you well, Miss Lawrence. I wish you both well."

Mr. Richard Lawrence did not do his work by halves. In spite of Mr. Lawrence's gout and his confinement to the counting-house, he found time to run down to Liverpool and talk over some arrangements with Dean Hastings. And the very next day Richborough heard that Mr. Hastings had sailed for the West Indies. Some complications had arisen out there in the cotton fields, and Mr. Hastings was gone to set them to rights.

Meanwhile, Miss Lawrence paid a friendly visit to Mrs. Calloway; during which she imparted a few hints of that designing Dorothy Stevens' wickedness, in wanting to come between her and a gentleman to whom she was privately engaged. Mrs. Calloway lifted her hands and eyes, and readily promised that if any letters came for Miss Stevens (unless in the handwriting of her infatuated son, of whom she did not feel assured yet) they should be sent intact to the heiress.

And Dora, finding herself looked upon with suspicion at Mrs. Calloway's, treated coldly, yearning to get away from Richborough, the scene of her misery, besought that lady to find her a situation at a distance. Mrs. Calloway seized upon the idea, and lost no time in doing it; but she made a stipulation with the girl that she should not disclose to Richborough where her new home was, or give her address.

"Indeed I will not," acquiesced the poor girl, all too readily. "I shall never care to see Richborough again, or to hear of it."

Dean Hastings was ploughing his way on the treacherous ocean: and of the two women he left behind it would be difficult to say which of their lives was the most desolate, wanting him; for when Dora's angry passion was over, the first sharp sting of his falsehood and his desertion past, then her tenderness returned. Night by night she bent in prayer for him at her bedside: "Lord, watch over him and protect him! Help him, and keep him from all harm."

Mr. Hastings landed in safety. The first packet of letters he received from home contained that angry one of renouncement, written by Dora. Not that it betrayed anger; only a calm, studied coldness. Opening mechanically the letter that lay next to it, he found it in the handwriting of Miss Lawrence. This letter chiefly contained items of news, written in a playful style: one of them ran as follows. "Will you be surprised to hear that Mrs. Calloway has at length given in to the persistency of the young people? Report says they are about to be married shortly. Do not break your heart: Dorothy Stevens is not worth it. It is very wrong of her to be so much given to flirting—worse than I am: and that, perhaps you will say, need not be."

The time went on; two years of it. Dean Hastings had left soon the employ of Mr. Lawrence and entered that of another house in the West Indies, connected with Richborough. News was heard of him but rarely; but at the end of the two years tidings came. Bad tidings, worse than had ever come before. He had died of yellow fever.

Close upon that, Annabella Lawrence gave her hand to her cousin. Her ill-starred passion, already nearly dead, dead of its very hopelessness, was now thrust away from her heart for ever. She entered upon her reign, as queen of society, heartless, callous, self-indulgent—but so she always had been.

But what of Dora Stevens? She was more isolated in her new home than she had been at Mrs. Calloway's; but she quietly did her duty in it. Her heart unconsciously remained true to its first love. She did not *hope;* that would be saying too much; but she did believe that all must be at an end between Dean and Miss Lawrence—else why had he not come home to claim her? But one day, upon taking up the *Richborough Gazette*, she read in it the death of Dean Hastings, of yellow fever—aged twenty-eight.

Until then she had not realised how great a part in her heart's life he had filled. Folding her hands, she wept lonely and bitter tears.

"When the sun sets." Can you picture that solitary girl's figure standing in the sunset that same evening, her hand shading her eyes, and gazing out over the sea in imagination towards the spot where her once fond lover lay in an alien grave. Look at her. The sunlight rests on the hill-tops behind, but she stands in shadow.

"I loved him," she cries in passionate remembrance. "I loved him; and—I—believe he once loved me. I love him still. Did he die thinking I was false to him? Oh, can there be anything in life or death more cruel than that?"

Her hands are lifted to her brow, as if to press down its throbbing. The pain there seems more than she can bear.

"Do you think he knows now?" she goes on, lifting her aching eyes as if in imaginary appeal to the gold and amethyst clouds left by the sunset. "Are all things made plain in that other world?—are all the cruel mysteries that perplex us here, the misunderstandings and the sorrows, made plain at last?"

Ah, who can tell her? Who knows?

Some three weeks, it might have been, after this, that Dora received a small, delicately-papered packet. It contained wedding-cake and cards: Mr. and Mrs. Richard Lawrence."

"She has lost no time," mused Dora that same evening, when, her duties over for the day, she stood in her favourite spot beyond the laurels, under the sunset. "No time if she was waiting for *him*. Oh, I wonder how it all was? Did he love her?—But, why ask it?—to what end now? She is here, beginning her wedded life; and he—lies *there*."

It appeared, however, if she spoke of Dean Hastings (as she undoubtedly did), that he did not lie there. He was at her elbow. His footsteps fell softly over the grass, and she did not see or hear him until he came round the laurels.

"I beg your pardon, Miss Stevens. I took the liberty of calling at the house to ask for you, and an old servant told me you had come out here."

She did not faint; but she did scream. Yes, it was Dean Hastings, looking ill and shadowy.

"Is it yourself?" she gasped. "We thought you were dead."

"But I did not die, Dorothy. I was given over in the yellow fever; and somehow or other my death got reported here, I find."

"And what have you come over for?" she asked, all in a tremble of confusion.

"Various odds and ends of matters. To get up my strength, for one thing; and to settle down at Richborough, for I am not going back; and to marry you, if you will have me."

"Oh, Mr. Hastings!"

"I have heard a word or two dropped from one and another at Richborough, Dorothy, for it is there that I have stayed since I landed; and I begin to think that you and I had some false friends. You are not yet Mrs. Charles Calloway——"

"Oh!" put in Dorothy.

"Stay a bit, my dear. And I am not yet the husband of Miss Lawrence. She has taken another, by the way. So—do you see any reason why we should not take one another? No impediment exists now, my darling; I am in a good position; a partner of the house I am in; and can set up our tent well. Dora, what do you say? You *know*, at least you ought to know, that I never would have married anyone but you."

What did she say? Nothing. She yielded herself to the arms held out to her, and bent her face down on the true-hearted, sheltering breast, happy sobs, joyful tears, bedewing it. Oh, how merciful was God!

The sun went down behind the hills in a blaze of glory. Its last lingering rays of crimson and purple fell upon them as they stood together in happiness.

HIS GUARDIAN ANGEL.

* * * * * * *

THEY drew back, shrinking and fearful, as he passed by the little crowd gathering about the church whose bell was calling to vespers. The women shivered as they glanced in the dark strange face, and whispered that, handsome as it was, there was an evil spirit in him. A wild, gloomy, fell face indeed, in which sorrow and passion and a dire purpose had set their seal, never to be softened save by one thing; never to be broken save by one hand.

Is he searching for some one, that he half pauses as he comes on and looks, with his great gleaming black eyes, from face to face of the passing groups? If so, he is ever searching, for they say that he always has that look—and he has been long enough about the voisinage of Verbois-sur-Loire for them to notice that, and to know his name, Count Max de St. Mar. But who he is, or what his history, and why he haunted the place, no one knew, and none cared to ask the gloomy, lonely stranger, who came and went, silent, solitary, and watchful.

A heavy frown darkens that strange, handsome face now, as he sees how afraid of him they are. The tall, slight form shivers as he passes swiftly on, shunning the church and people—on, on, towards the wooded banks of the fast-flowing Loire.

What is he? who is he? To what strange story is that gloomy, suffering, passionate face an index? Is he a reckless dare-devil? Is there the doom of a dark deed upon him? Or is he hugging close a great vengeance which is eating out heart and soul, and forging, each hour, a new link to the chain which binds him to the Gates of Darkness?

What sound is it that meets his ear as he moves on, with a step now slow and weary? Not the chanting from the church away behind him; not the ceaseless rush of the waters before him. No, the rich, soft tones, mellow and full as the nightingale's note, of a girlish voice singing—to herself, it seemed. He knew the sweet melody, and started to hear the words so distinctly.

"Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis."

Yet he paused as if fascinated, till the last soft cadence died away. Then he pushed aside the branches of the trees, and came out upon the river bank.

There she sat with a lap full of flowers, a beautiful golden-haired child, for she scarcely numbered sixteen years, with great, dreamy, loving eyes, and an exquisite Madonna face.

Light as his step was, she heard it and turned. Would she too

shrink and fly? did she too know his name and whisper that he was possessed and cast in shadow? and if so, was it not true? Had he not hidden his cross away twenty years ago, and clasped a devil to his breast instead? nestled the dark thing into his very heart so close that his Guardian Angel had lost all hold save one frail thread of gold?

No, she does not shrink; but as his tall, slight figure comes between her and the waters, she looks up in his face and smiles, half in sweet childlike recognition, half with the deep tender pity that an angel's face might wear. Involuntarily the gloomy stranger paused, in very wonder that she too did not shrink from his glance.

"Child, art thou weaving offerings to the river god!" he said, pointing to the flowers—and the deep voice was full of music.

"Ah, no; they would die," said the girl, shaking her golden head. "Some—these white flowers—are for the church, not these roses. Will Monsieur accept this one?"

The little fingers picked out the most beautiful moss-rose, and offered it. "You will not be robbing la Sainte Vierge, M. de St. Mar?"

He took the rose gravely, and laying his hand lightly on her head, said:

"She would not say thee nay if *thou* gathered them, my child."

Somehow it came naturally to his lips to call her child. She was so very young and fair, and he full twenty years older, with lines on his brow, and grey hairs straying amongst his coal-black locks.

"How is it," he added, suddenly, "that you do not fear me like the others?"

The blue eyes looked up wonderingly. "Fear you! Oh, no, I am only sorry for you."

Sorry for him! Was he dreaming? Why should this pure being be sorry for him? The flash of light in the black darkness of his soul dazzled him.

He had placed the rose in his breast; now he folded his arms tightly. Did the fell thing that lay there coiled so closely quiver and tremble at the soft voice that stole from far off to its jealous ear.

"Not afraid—sorry," he repeated, looking down on her. "Child, what do they call you?"

"M. le Comte, they call me La Cora."

"A sweet name; but thou art no peasant-born girl, Cora."

"Peasant; oh, no," she said, smiling. "No more than M. de St. Mar."

"How know you who or what I am?" he said quickly.

"I only know Monsieur's name."

"Do you live among the fairies, Cora?"

The girl smiled again and answered, No, she was living with M. le Curé, her dead mother's brother.

The dark strange man stood looking down on the child. "Belle

petite, voilà votre rose; know you what it means in Flora's graceful language?"

"It means love, M. le Comte."

"Love!" he repeated, half aloud in Italian, with such bitter emphasis that the child shivered; "never more for me. Lost, lost! sold for the one thing left me: the demon I have hugged till naught else is left to Max de St. Mar."

"Naught else but what, signor mio?" said the child's pitying tones in the softest Etruscan.

The man started back. "Nothing, child! nothing. Take back the rose, it is not for me."

But the little fingers stayed his hand ere it could take the flower from his breast. "Pover' infelice! wear it, and when it is dead La Cora will give you another."

The slender, white-robed form glided away through the trees. Was it a child hovering on the confines between girl and womanhood, or was it an angel or a vision? No, there nestled the rose in his breast, there in his ear still lingered the deep pathetic pity and sorrow in those two words, "Pover' infelice."

"Away! away! it is too late!" came his awful cry; "naught is left but the power of vengeance! body and soul have paid the price, and they are lost. Ha! what then, when mine is the vengeance!" Was it a dream or a fancy that he heard as from afar that child's voice, like distant music, whisper back like the echo of other years, "Vengeance is MINE, I will repay, saith the Lord."

With a stifled cry the man of fell purpose fled away from the spot; but the rose still lay on his breast

Had his guardian angel, clinging yet to the one frail thread left, breathed its heavenly mission into that young, pure human heart, and left her to work it out? It might have been so, for from that time the miserable, gloomy man, wrapped in the very darkness of his great sin, sought her out, or let her seek him—he could scarce have said which it was. Day after day they would stray together through the woods, or by the river-bank, or often cross it in her little boat and wander on the other side; she—the pure, innocent girl who had read him, yet never shrunk, always sprang joyously to meet him. M. le Curé, good, guileless old man, had been fearful at first, but she had whispered a word in his ear that made him smile and bid her "God speed, then," and the simple villagers, when they saw the strangely-matched pair pass, came at last to say, crossing themselves, that "Heaven had sent La Cora, and neither man nor devil could harm her." Perhaps there was more truth in their ignorant, beautiful faith, half superstitious though it might be, than wiser heads have fathomed.

One day she had wandered down first to the bank where, now dark and quiet, the stately Loire flowed more gently; in vain the golden-headed Cora stood ready by the little boat and called aloud, "Cher M. Max, je suis à vous."

For once M. de St. Mar was late, and the child pushed off, keeping, however, within hail; but as she turned the boat's head, a voice called across from the opposite bank, for the river was narrow there, "Holà! is that Verbois?"

A man was standing on the bank, and La Cora, tuning her voice so as to throw it well across without any effort to herself, answered:

"Oui, Monsieur, c'est Verbois-sur-Loire."

"Eh bien! And how am I to get to it? I have lost my way, somehow."

"Monsieur can cross three miles below this at Aumône."

"Unless," called the stranger, pleasantly, "Mademoiselle would allow me the honour of pulling across in the boat. I am weary, for I am fifty years old and have walked far."

"I will ferry Monsieur over."

He threw himself on the turf and watched the pretty boat as it came swiftly on under the skilled, steady pull of the young girl, but the moment the boat's nose touched he rose and stepped down.

"How can I thank you, my child? Permit me to relieve you."

"No, thank you. Sit down, Monsieur, if you please; my boat knows me best."

For now that she saw him close the child preferred to keep the mastery of the situation. His face was such a one as few would take on trust, for all its smiling front and grey hairs.

Glancing round presently, she thought she saw the tall form she had never been so glad to see as now, pass along towards some noble trees right down by the water's edge; if so, he paused, looked towards the boat, and suddenly disappeared behind the trees.

A little faster the child's heart beat, and she instantly headed for those very trees, rejoicing that M. de St. Mar was there, that when she landed her passenger she would not be alone with him. Oh! that wonderful instinct of womanhood, which a loving Father has implanted for her protection in the heart of the youngest, the most innocent, the most trusting.

She sprang to shore quickly and fastened the boat tightly to a sapling, as the slower stranger set foot on land.

In that moment St. Mar stepped suddenly forward face to face with the stranger, and the child started to see a pistol in his right hand, and a look in the face she loved such as might well strike terror into her and the man before him; such desperate, passionate hatred, such fierce, blazing wrath, such a deep, relentless purpose, that the stranger shrunk in abject terror, and Cora laid her little trembling hand, never yet repulsed, on St. Mar's arm. He put her sternly back.

"At last, at last, I have the devil incarnate in my power. Turn to fly, stir a step, and you die five minutes sooner! You, whom I have sought for twenty years; you, who escaped justice, shall not elude me. Where is my only, my twin brother? the boy whose innocence you poisoned; whom you dragged into your own vices, into sin, step

by step; and when he tried madly to free himself, taunted him, till in his misery—ha! you know it was not suicide, it was murder, murder on your own head, and with body and soul you shall pay the ransom!"

But in the very second that he fired, the weapon was struck up and hurled into the rolling waters by a girl's slight hand.

"The boat!" she cried. "Thou murderer—fly! For his own soul's sake he shall leave vengeance to God. Fly!"

"Child, back, back, or ——"

He was springing desperately on his foe, but the child threw herself on his breast, wrapping her arms around him with a strength he could not loosen without using cruel force; and the boat shot out into the stream.

"Loose thy hold, Cora! Thou hast let my brother's murderer escape my vengeance," he cried, with a fierce wrath which seemed as if it would fain shatter even this frail loved form to reach his end.

But she was weeping bitterly now. "Oh, Max! I have but saved thy soul from death, from the awful stain of blood. See,"—loosing her clasp only to cling as closely to his arm—"he is gone, and will never more cross thy path."

He looked down on her beautiful face with his wild gleaming eyes.

"Child, you have done me a bitter wrong. For twenty long years have I nourished this just vengeance, lived on it, my only hope, my all; dreamed, brooded, fed on it, till all else vanished before it; earth and heaven, body and soul were flung into the scale! I sold everything in this world and the next for this one jewel, and you, *you* whom I loved, rob me of it!"

"The jewel was false," said the child, shaking her golden head. "The fruit was from the Dead Sea; the vengeance is God's, not yours."

"Not mine!" He stopped, choked by the force of his own passions.

The soft voice came again.

"Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord; cast out the evil spirit from thy breast, and wear instead this Cross of Christ." And next the rose of her love she laid the golden crucifix she wore.

But he started back with a cry of horror. "Take it back, I dare not touch it! Too late, too late! take it away, child! I have cast hope and cross behind me far too long."

"Oh, hush thee! hush thee, Max! for Christ hath not forgotten the soul for which He died. He surely sent thy Cora this day to stay thy hand from blood-guiltiness, and win thee back to Him."

"Child, child, close indeed hast thou stolen into this seared heart, but the demon is there still. I cannot give up; it is too late. Leave me; I am lost to all but vengeance."

Out of the deep eyes uplifted to his troubled face looked the very

spirit of his guardian angel, and the sweet voice answered: "Even at the eleventh hour it is not too late. I will not leave thee, Max; never till my mission is finished, and thy tear of repentance hath fallen at the foot of the Cross. Then, if thou wilt, I will see thy face no more."

The serpent quivered and trembled for its hold, as he stooped and kissed that pure brow with deep, grave reverence; then suffered the little clinging hand to lead him away.

The good old Curé stood at his garden gate and shook his head at La Cora as she came across the pretty churchyard.

"Oh, thou wicked golden hair! wandering again with that black-browed man, whom the Prince of Darkness seems to have marked for his own." But the child's voice came plaintively.

"Oh, father, I cannot find him. When I call, no voice answers me save the heartless echo; when I search, I see only my own shadow."

"Let him bide, or let him go, ma fille," said the Curé, crossing himself. "He is one sold to Satan; he hath banned himself from the Church and from his kind; he fears not God, nor regards man. He is gone, ma fille."

"Oh, not gone from me till he hath heard my message," the plaintive tones came again, as the white-robed form, with its golden mantle of burnished hair, retreated towards the river; on, on, still with his name on her lips so full of tender pathos and entreaty.

"Max! oh, Max! three days are gone since thou hast left thy Cora to call thee in vain."

Suddenly the light step paused, the sad eyes brightened, and she sprang forward like a fawn, as she caught sight of the form she sought.

"Cora, child, leave me alone with the dread companions you would supplant—the relentless purpose, the stern vengeance you would rival with every loving look and touch. I will not, dare not give up; my brother's blood cries to me from the ground. I will have blood for blood. Child or angel, thou temptest thy Max in vain. Keep back,"—he stretched out his arm—"I *cannot* forgive; and I would not if I could."

How was it she stole within his guard, and like a voice in a dream, so far off, yet so near, the music of that voice came to his ear.

"Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him, until seven times? And he answered and said: I say unto you, not until seven times, but until seventy times seven."

Why does the serpent in his bosom lift its demon head in fierce terror and loosen its hideous coils? Why, when he tried to put her from him, could he only draw his arm close round her, as if to let her go was death?

"Lay thy pure face upon this miserable breast, O child of the

Paradise thy Max hath lost, for at thy touch the fell serpent loosens its awful grasp. If I could forego the vengeance which is my life's purpose: if I could ever forgive my brother's blood for thy sake——"

"For Christ's sake, Max, Who died laden with thy sins to save thy soul. He loves thee as Cora can never love thee."

He suddenly held her off, gazing on her with the wondering reverence men give to a saint.

"Child, know you what you ask of me? Couldst thou do it? Neither father, mother, brother, nor sister hast thou; no human being, as I had, in whom my very soul was wrapped round, whom every tendril of my heart clung to with a love that had no bounds; who was first to me in all the world!"

"Ah! Stay thee, Max! I have one I love as thou hast said; one for whose welfare life would be but a light price, and death lose its sting."

He started, and the direful gloom on his brow deepened as he asked, still holding her:

"Whom lovest thou so well?"

Out of the spiritual eyes his watchful guardian angel surely looked, smiled half sorrowfully as the gentle lips moved.

"Thyself."

There was dead silence for a minute; then, with a strange, incredulous look in his eyes, he said under his breath:

"Am I in a dream? is it angel or spirit or child that I hold? is it possible so pure a being can love St. Mar, wild, seared, fallen as he is? No: I have lost heaven and human love; it *cannot* be true."

"It is true."

Soft and musical as the flowing waters at their feet came the answer; and a new, strange, steadfast light flashed up into the wild, sorrowful eyes.

"Ah! list thee, Cora, if indeed it is the truth. Thou sayest forgive; but if that man were to lure me on to ruin, to forget thee, and then take my life, could'st thou forgive?"

"Ah! Max, not in mine own strength, but in Christ's, who forgave His murderers. Ah! what hath he done to thee in comparison to the wounds thou hast given thy Lord every hour of thy life, every moment of these twenty years? Vengeance is Mine. Thou shalt not kill, saith God; and thou mortal creature of His hand hast dared to set aside the divine command, to clasp to thy bosom the demon of murder, and sell to Satan the body and soul which thy Master hath redeemed at such a price! The death of Christ hath paid thy ransom from eternal death, and yet now thou crucifiest Him afresh with the merciless sword of thy great sin! Crush the thought of the dark crime beneath the weight of the cross; leave justice to Him who gave life, and ere it is too late win pardon by Christ's sacrifice and thy penitence. See! the sun is sinking behind wold and river; shall it go down yet once again upon thy wrath?"

"Cora, Cora, woman or angel, thou hast conquered. I have sinned grievously: teach me to repent."

The proud man's stately form was bowed down at her feet, hiding his passionate weeping in her white robe. It might well have been an angel that bent over the agonised penitent, as she bent over him in deepest love and tenderness, with such a heavenly joy in her beauteous face as the choir above wears, when the messenger lays the tears of repentance before the great white throne. And before that priceless diamond the hideous serpent loosed his last fell coil and fled in terror away, away; for it could not live in the heart wherein the cross of Christ had been so well planted by the loving hand of the pure being who, henceforth ever at his side, was to lead him on in the golden pathway as his wife and guardian angel.

THE CHURCHYARD BY THE SEA.

Where ocean breezes sweep across the restless deep,
It stands, with headstones quaint with sculpture rude,
Its green turf thickly sown with dust of lives unknown,
Like withered leaves on autumn pathways strewed.

Willow nor cypress bough shadow the dead below,
Nor mournful yew by summer's soft breath stirred,
The dawn, and twilight's fall, never made musical
By carol clear of some sweet-throated bird.

Not from the sunny earth, her tones of sylvan mirth,
Her flowery meads, and plains of waving corn,
But from the treach'rous waves, their rocks and sparry caves,
Unto their rest, were these sad sleepers borne.

Perchance they had their home far from the crested foam,
And blue seas rippling o'er the pink-lipped shells,
Some green vale far away, where sweet-voiced waters play,
And the bee murmurs in the wild flower's bells.

Oh, churchyard drear and lone! haunted by voices gone,
And silent feet, and lives like rose-leaves shed,
Thy dust shall yet arise, when from our earthly skies
Mists fade away and seas give up their dead!

J. I. L.

M. ELLEN EDWARDS. J. SWAIN.

THE WISE WOMAN.

THE ARGOSY.

SEPTEMBER, 1877.

GABRIEL'S APPOINTMENT.

CHAPTER XXV.

HOW LUCY SAW A WISE WOMAN.

A WILD, stormy evening—the wind sweeping in from the south-west, and the long lines of foam breaking with ceaseless violence on beach and rock; sharp arrowy flights of rain carried aslant across moor and meadow, beating against window-panes, and tearing the first blossom from the trees—what could be less like the May of which poets sing as if it were meant for nothing but love and mirth, for dances on the turf by day, and wanderings beneath the moon by night? So might have thought our newly-married friends, Joel and Lucy Treherne, who were caught by the gale under rather untoward circumstances, while endeavouring to make their way across country to Lowlevels in a somewhat crazy vehicle, calling itself a fly, belonging to the inn at Level Bridge. They had been spending a very happy time among Joel's relatives, and had just left a cousin's farm; availing themselves of this accidental accommodation in preference to an open cart, which was the only alternative, the driver boasting of his intimate acquaintance with every lane and turning, and his capability of conveying them twice the distance with perfect ease to themselves, not to say his horse. As the latter had had a good rest and feed, and was certainly accustomed to the kind of work, Joel decided that the fly might be safer for his bride than the open cart, which he should have preferred had he been alone; but before they had accomplished a third of the journey, he began to doubt the wisdom of his decision. Whether the cousin's parting cup of cider was stronger than Tom Prowse was accustomed to, or had been administered a little too soon after other cups not worth mentioning, or whether his own knowledge was not quite

equal to his self-assertion—certain it was that the distance seemed to increase with the difficulties, and strong doubts arose in the Cornishman's mind whether every step they were taking might not be leading them further from the place they hoped to reach.

With a private determination to pull up at the first habitation they came to, he kept his own counsel for the present, talking cheerfully to his bride lest her courage should fail her just when she might need it most. But Lucy carried an amount of happiness about her now that made her indifferent to such trifles as wind and rain, stony hills and steep descents, crazy springs and leaky carriage roof. The more she was jolted, the more she laughed; and as to being afraid of anything that could happen, what was there in the way of adventure that Joel was not prepared to meet? It would be rather grand to have some adventure, such as he had described, if only for the pride and pleasure of seeing his strength and cleverness triumph over every difficulty. Was he not the bravest and best of men, the terror of the guilty, the guardian of the helpless, the faithful follower of his captain, the trusted comrade of the Ironhand, who had told her himself that he would rather have Joel at his back than half-a-dozen soldiers? And if the worst came to the worst, and they couldn't find their way, why, it would be like a page out of Robinson Crusoe to make a hut or a tent out of doors: as she was confident he could do in five minutes, though she did not exactly know how.

It must be confessed that Joel by no means shared her confidence. The more cheerily he talked about the good supper and bright welcome awaiting them at Lowlevels, the less he expected to get there under the circumstances; and for some way, in spite of Lucy's suggesting that he would catch cold, sat leaning out of the window, endeavouring to ascertain what dangers loomed ahead. A sudden bump, more decided than ordinary, brought matters to a crisis; the driver pulled up with an ejaculation of dismay, and Joel was out of the carriage in a moment.

"Shaft splintered—wheel nearly off! Lively travelling, this. Have you any notion where you are, mate?"

Of course he had—didn't he know every inch of the way? Yon was old Bess Cheveril's cottage, and one of the worst bits of road in the whole country round. Everybody that knew anything knew that.

What made him come that way, then?

Well, you see, it was not quite the way he meant to come, but being there, they must make the best of it, for they couldn't turn round. Had Bess Cheveril a cart that she could lend them? Yes, but she was not always in the humour to lend it: and it soon appeared that no inducement would make Mr. Prowse invade her territories himself. If Mr. Treherne liked to risk it, he might—the light in the window would show him the house; only he must mind and not damage her garden or her cat, or she would put bad luck upon him for the next twelvemonth.

"Ah," said Joel; "a wise woman, I take it?"

"Just that, and knows more than is quite good for her, they say, and a terrible hand at a bruise, or a burn, or a broken limb, or blight in the orchards, or foot-rot with the sheep—only she'd as soon give 'em as take 'em away, and it's a chance in what temper you may find her."

"I'll chance it this once," said Joel, and he opened the door of the fly. "Lucy, my dear, the weather is holding up just this minute, and if you don't mind walking a little way, you'll soon be under cover; and I'll be bound we shall manage to get a lift somehow."

Lucy was ready. But she found it very rough, and very wet walking, and it had grown so dark that she had no idea where she was putting her feet; she could only cling to her husband's arm, while he held the umbrella over her head, and trust to his ability to pull her out of any peril she might fall into. Prevention being better than cure, he simplified the matter at last by shutting the umbrella, and (as she afterwards described it) picking her up as if she had been a parcel to be handed in at the door.

It was not, however, so easy to hand anything in at first, for no one answered his knock; it required a kick or two to rouse the inmates to the duties of hospitality. An elderly woman unbarred the door, whom Joel recognised as an old acquaintance; but the scared look in her eyes, as they fell upon Lucy, now permitted to stand on her own feet, almost took away his presence of mind.

"Why, Mrs. Medland, you look as if you saw a ghost. I'm sure you'll let my wife in, out of the rain. Thank ye."

And without waiting for further welcome, he gently pushed his way in, and led Lucy to the kitchen fire. Mrs. Medland followed, holding up her hands and shaking her head.

"I couldn't have believed it if I hadn't seen it with my own eyes and heard it with my own ears. Where ever have you dropped from?"

"Dropped from? We've been dropped upon pretty heavy, all the way from Stoneycrop Farm, across such roads as are a disgrace to the county," said Joel; "but I hope the worst is over now, and if so be you'll help us to a trap, that we may get on to Lowlevels, why, it shan't be with thanks only that we make it worth your while. We've got a sister looking out for us, and she'll be growing uneasy."

"I'll speak to my husband, sir; and see if he can accommodate you—but, dear heart alive, you've put me in such a flutter I don't know which way to turn. She'll want to see you, I know she will, and it will be no use trying to deceive her. Them as do, finds out their mistake too late. You are not afraid, my dear, are you?"

Lucy glanced at her husband in some dismay; he was evidently puzzled.

"What do you want her to do, missis?"

"Why, of course she'll go in and see the old lady. Hasn't she

been expecting her all day: and me, thinking she was a bit wrong in her head, telling her every minute she'd come, just to keep her quiet. And not a thing will she eat or drink that I can offer her, though the doctor said she was to be kept up, regular—and well he knows me for a cook as nature can depend upon, to be a staff and not a snare. But she's took that fancy into her head that sets her against them as would be her best of friends: and unless you can make her take something, she'll be gone before we know where we are. And then what will become of us all?"

"At it again, old woman?" growled her husband's voice out of the darkness—"always talking, *you* are. You'll talk too much one of these days."

"How can you say so, Medland, when I hardly ever open my lips? And you'd a deal better be looking after the trap for Mr. Treherne, seeing as we owes a duty to the old lady to earn all we can for her, and she not able to bargain for herself. I'm sure the gentleman will consider that in the fare, and do what's handsome."

"You get us the trap, and we'll not quarrel over what is right and fair," began Joel, when the sound of three taps with a stick cut him short.

"That your old lady?" asked Joel, good-humouredly.

"Indeed, it is, sir: and unless your good lady will go in with me, I know she'll be put out. She's not like other women, you know, sir, and it isn't safe to cross her if you can help it."

"Then I must go in with you," said he, "for my wife is new to these things, and she'll feel easier if I am there. Step in and say we are coming: and you, old gentleman, just see how you can help our driver in the lane. Look alive now, or he'll think your wise woman has made away with us. I'll come after you in a minute."

He would have gone then and there, but for Lucy's evident terror; she could face anything with him at her elbow, but without him it was a different matter. Nor was the first sight of the old woman, who was said to be expecting her, calculated to reassure her nerves.

Age and infirmity were common sights in St. Edmund's district, but never before had Lucy seen such a face as old Bess Cheveril's. Seated by the fire, with her wrinkled hands on her knees, and her head partly sunk on her bosom, she might have been taken for some sibyl of old. Her hair was perfectly white, and strayed down beneath the cap and woollen handkerchief that formed her headgear; her skin a complete network of wrinkles; and her eyes, partly shaded by shaggy eyebrows, retaining alone in their clear, cold light the vitality which seemed to be dying out of every other part of her shrunken frame. How old she really was, nobody knew; except perhaps Mrs. Salisbury. Popular opinion gave her credit for more years than any reasonable person could be expected to believe in; but neither her sight nor her hearing had suffered, and her present illness seemed to be a mere failing of power—there was no actual disease, only so much

weakness that her life depended on her system being kept up. This, by Mrs. Medland's account, was made almost impossible by her refusal to accept her services.

As Lucy and Joel entered, the old woman raised her head and looked at them without any appearance of surprise, merely remarking, "So you've come at last." But the voice was so unlike what Lucy expected that her terror quite passed away. Instead of being harsh, or surly, or grumbling, it was peculiarly quiet and sad; and the young wife's kind heart was touched. The poor old thing was wandering, of course, but she should not starve if a kind word would induce her to eat, so she humoured the delusion, whatever it might be, and assumed the importance of an expected guest, who is confident of welcome and sure of approval.

"Yes, Mrs. Cheveril, we are come at last, and the roads are so rough it is a wonder we ever got here at all; but I am sorry to find you are not well, and that you have had no dinner. You should not have waited for us—and I must insist on your having your broth this minute."

At her whisper, Joel stepped back into the next room to fetch the basin, which had been keeping hot on the hearth; and he gave Mrs. Medland to understand, with a smile of triumph, that his wife was fully equal to the occasion. His triumph was justified by the result, for old Bess made no objection to being fed by Lucy, and devoured the broth and bread with the eagerness of real hunger. When she had finished, she took hold of Lucy's left hand and looked at her ring.

"You made up your mind at last, did you? It was time—it was time. And which of them is it?"

"Which of them?" repeated Lucy, in some confusion.

"Is it the gay, tall, free-handed one?—or the dark brother, whose head is in his books, and is so handy with his tools?"

"Here is my husband, Mrs. Cheveril," stammered Lucy.

The old woman only smiled; her delusion, whatever it was, had its own laws and limits, and Joel's stalwart figure had no place therein. She nodded several times, and her lips moved as if she were talking to herself before she again spoke aloud.

"You think you have made your fortune, don't you? and that you'll come back here one day, to be a fine lady in your pony carriage, and have the precious stones for your own? That's been in your heart all along, I know, for all your winsome looks and ways. But you'll never have them, and you'll never see the day you look to. And if your master doesn't rue the choice you made, it will be along of his love being stronger and truer than your'n, my maid—stronger and truer than your'n."

"Joel, dear, what does she mean?" said Lucy, almost in tears.

"She is dreaming of something else, poor body, that we have nothing to do with. I'll try her on a fresh tack," said Joel, and

quietly planted himself in front of the old woman, that she might see him without turning her head.

"Mother," he said, gently, "did you know anything of one Jack Cheveril, who lived, they say, in these parts?"

The clear, cold eyes gazed at him as if to pierce his soul.

"You're not one of the police?"

"No, indeed."

"There has been one of them hanging about here, asking the same question, but I told him nought. Why should I tell *you?*"

"Because I could tell you something in return."

"About Jack? My poor lad! It's long since I had news of him. He's a clever lad, but he never thinks of writing, though Madam made him a fine scholar. Ah, dear! Come here, my maid, I want to tell you a secret. If you'll help Jack to get the prize, I'll help you. You'll want a friend before you've done; and Jack is that idle he'll never win anything unless he gets a helping hand."

"Well, mother, his working day is over now," said Joel, "so we'll hope he did win something worth having at last. He lies in a quiet corner, and Christian hands laid him there, in the grave I dug."

"She does not understand, poor thing," murmured Lucy; and, indeed, it was very doubtful whether the meaning of the words did reach the wandering intellect. Though they awakened recollections in her brain, and set her talking again in an altered tone.

"A quiet corner, did he say? Aye, he came down to find one; and they were all hard upon him, and cast up his bad companions in his teeth—and he seemed to hear the very winds whispering and the waters babbling the story that no one was to know. And when he came to me that night his face was like a dead man's, so white and cold and stiff—and he cried like any child on my neck, for he said I was all he had left, and he should never see me again."

There was a short silence. She seemed to be pondering something in her mind which she could not exactly recollect.

"Four foot from the surface—aye; and the third brick after the second ledge—that's it. And as soon as I am strong again—for I'm a hale woman for my years, as the gentlefolk know—I'll go down to Lowlevels myself some dark night, and see what an old woman can find. They say as some have been frightened there: but there's none, living nor dead, that can frighten old Bess. Man after man has tried his luck, and never found what he looked for. They didn't ask old Bess first, you see, my dear—no, they didn't."

"Did Jack ever talk to you of his mate, Hughes?" asked Joel, on whom not a word was lost. Something in his voice, which compassion made peculiarly gentle, seemed to have its effect on the aged brain, now groping confusedly in a jungle of tangled memories. She looked up at the tall Cornishman with a wistful sadness in her eyes.

"Don't 'ee have nothing to do with Joe Hughes, though he's my own kin. He was the ruin of Jack; and he'll be yours, if you let him."

"He'll ruin nobody any more, mother: he went to his reckoning before Jack did. I'm afraid it was a bit heavy, but we've no call to be his judge."

Her shrivelled hands worked as she sat there, looking at the fire, and the words came dropping from her lips as if she were repeating a lesson by heart.

"Tell Madam—aye, that I will, my dear—tell her I never meant to do it, and would have undone it if I could—and I wanted to tell her, but my heart failed me. Anyhow I've gained nought, and I've lost everything, and that's punishment enough—and so it is, my boy, so it is, sure."

"Joel, dear, she is growing faint," cried Lucy, starting up.

The old woman had, indeed, become very cold and livid, and it was necessary to summon Mrs. Medland and have her assisted into her bed, whence it seemed unlikely she would ever rise again. All that her goodwill and limited experience could suggest, the young wife readily performed for the sufferer's relief and comfort; but it was with indescribable satisfaction she at last heard that the trap was ready to carry them on. It had been all like a ghastly dream; and Joel felt, when she took his arm, that she was shivering from head to foot. Mrs. Medland, whose demeanour was that of almost servile obsequiousness, pressed her to remain where she was for the night, proffering hospitality with assurances of welcome, as from hardworking folks, who were honest, though put upon; but the bare suggestion roused Mrs. Treherne's spirits directly, and she protested that all she wanted was air.

"You've not far to go for that," said her husband. And so she found; for she had hardly taken her seat in the open cart by his side when the gust of wind nearly carried away her umbrella. Talking was quite out of the question, even if Joel had not been too much occupied with the management and guidance of his horse to have leisure for it. The battle with the elements, however, had a wonderfully reviving effect, and by the time they reached Lowlevels, Lucy was in all the glad anticipation of her sister's welcome.

The outer gate was barred and bolted; and as Joel rang the bell the deep bark of a dog came back in reply. To the amazement of his bride, Joel set up a peculiar call, well known to Australians, but not usual in St. Edmund's—indeed, Mr. Forrest had asked Martin, as a particular favour, not to introduce it into the night-school. The wind and rain had just arrived at one of their pauses, and the long-drawn "Coo—ee" had a strange effect in the darkness. In another moment the gate was opened, the light of a lantern flashed in their faces, and Martin's voice came cheerily from behind it.

"We began to think you were lost!"

"So did I," was Joel's answer, as he led the horse in; "only I had my good luck on board, and couldn't go far wrong. Here we are, Lucy"—as he lifted her out of the cart,—"and the first

thing you must do is to give your hand to this friend of mine, for you may go a long way before you'll find a better."

"Say a brother, if she will put up with one out of the bush," said Martin, as he gave the brotherly greeting which the blushing girl did not reject. His hand clasped Joel's for a moment with a tight pressure that spoke the language they both understood. Very few words of affection ever passed between them, but each knew that the other would give his life for him, if need were, as assuredly as both would give theirs for the captain. They all moved on together into the bright, cheerful kitchen, where a tempting meal was waiting for the travellers, and where Nurse Ellis, looking as much at home as if she had been there half her life, came forward to receive Lucy. Everything looked a pleasant welcome: and only one element was missing, which Lucy's eyes sought restlessly in vain.

Where was Grace?

Not at home just then, was Mrs. Ellis's answer: they were not to wait, as she would not be in to supper. With this Mrs. Treherne had to be content. Though much disappointed she remembered how odd Grace had been lately in her ways, and supposed there was some good reason, which would be explained in private. So she concealed her vexation: when supper was ended, Nurse Ellis judged it wise to keep her no longer in suspense.

"It is no use listening for the bell, my dear; Grace won't be in to-night."

"Not to-night? Where is she gone, then?"

"Well, I don't feel quite sure, for she had no idea of it herself in the morning, and so did not let me know—but I think she is gone to London."

CHAPTER XXVI.

MR. FORREST FINDS A HOLIDAY TASK.

The blow was so unexpected that it was some minutes before Lucy could falter forth a word; but Mrs. Ellis would not wait for her questions—she told her at once all she knew. Grace had walked over to the station in the morning, across the fields—a good long walk, but she said the exercise would do her good—to see Miss Kerr go off with the two ladies, Mrs. Salisbury and Miss Strahan. Miss Strahan's papa had been down to see her, and had returned to town a day or two before, and they were to follow him. Mr. Martin had sent young Robert Medland to show the way, and be of any use that he could; and Robert Medland came back by himself, and said Miss Pyne was gone off in the train—he had seen her face at the window. There was no message and no explanation.

Lucy gasped for breath, and looked at Martin: who shook his head

"I wish I had gone with her myself," he said, "but I got a message that old Bess Cheveril wished me to be there when the doctor called this morning; and that kept me hanging about her place for a couple of hours, and he never came, after all. But I learned something there which may throw a light on the matter. A lodger of hers left this morning, who called himself a London police officer, and who had met with an accident which disabled his right arm. He has been prowling about here lately, in a fashion that does no credit to the force; and it is my belief that Grace is gone with *him*."

Lucy started up and clasped her hands in terror.

"What is his name?"

"I fancy he has one for every day in the week, but that Joel and I know him as Wily Wilkins: and, if so, that your sister knows his real name, and what he is doing. Stop, sister Lucy—hear all I have to say. I believe in Grace as you do; and that if she is gone with him, or after him, of her own free will, it is as a brave, faithful woman, to pull him back from ruin, and stand between us and the wrong he means to do!"

A terrible suspicion was creeping into Lucy's heart: but as if she would forcibly drive it back she turned almost angrily on the speaker, to ask what made him suppose her sister would care like that for any man in England. Here was Mrs. Ellis, who knew, if he did not, that Grace had always been true to one who was to come for her some day, perhaps very soon; that it was only the weary waiting that made her look so ill—if *he* would only come back it would be all right. But Mrs. Ellis had no cheering response to make.

"Ah, my poor child," she said, sadly, "I'm afraid your sister knows too well that she has nothing now to look forward to, except from the mercy of God. She has bravely kept it to herself, but I see it all, and wonder that she has held her head up as she has."

"Is Darch Williams dead?" whispered Lucy. It would indeed be a mournful end to all the hopes connected with his name; but why had Grace kept it from her.

The good nurse shook her head. "No, my dear; if he were dead, the trouble would be above board, and easier to bear. What would *your* life be, Lucy, if instead of driving up to the door, with your good husband to bring you in, as something he is proud to show, you had to steal out at his call to meet him in lanes and corners, afraid of being seen, and yet more afraid of not being able to go—knowing all the while what people might say and think, yet taking the blame lest suspicion should light upon him? This is what Grace has been doing—and I leave you to guess who she would do it for."

Lucy covered her face with her hands. She saw it all; the only wonder was that she had never seen it before. If that Mr. Jones, with his cough, who professed to be Darch's messenger, was Darch himself, all that had seemed strange in Grace's behaviour was accounted for. But oh, how grievous was the disappointment; how heavy the

fall! The loyal belief in which she had grown up could not be overthrown without a shock: after succumbing for a few moments, she made a passionate effort to shake off the conviction. Grace would do nothing wrong; if it were indeed Darch, there must be some reason for her keeping the secret, which would be cleared up in time; and, meanwhile, she would not be the first to turn against him, after thinking of him as a brother all these years. They always knew he had enemies; and perhaps he only wanted fair play, and a true friend, to get clear of difficulties and start fresh. She looked from Joel to Martin, with tears in her eyes, to see if there were any hope or encouragement in either face. Neither of them spoke for a few minutes; but Joel passed his great hand caressingly over her hair, and Martin stooped over Settler, which lay as usual at his feet, pulling his ears thoughtfully while considering his reply.

"I tell you what," he said, abruptly, as he looked up, "I have done for Grace's sake what I would not have done for anyone else—I have been content to keep guard against the fellow, and have let him alone, rather than drive matters to the worst and break her heart; but I am not sure that I have done right—quite the reverse, most likely. Anyhow, my little sister, *you* may be sure of this—that we'll do what we can for her and for you. If such a woman can still hold on to such a man, why, there is a chance more for him than I thought he had; but if we find she is gone against her will, Joel and I must lay our heads together how to get her back again. And when we do that, we generally hit upon something, corporal, don't we?"

"Aye, aye," said Joel; "but it would be my duty now."

"Nothing of the sort—you have your wife to look after; that is your first duty. Is it not, nurse?"

"And will be yours some day, sir," she replied, "and I hope I shall live to see it."

"Mine?" His brow contracted, though he laughed, and his eyes seemed to glow through their long lashes. "Who would have a vagabond without a calling, or a home, or even a name? Come, Settler, it is time to go on our rounds. If we are ever missed, it must be for our good service; no sweet eyes will grow dim with watching for you and me."

The dog was on the alert directly: but no one else moved, and no one spoke till he had left the kitchen. Then Joel turned to his wife, and looked wistfully in her face; it was a more critical moment for their happiness than either knew. Well was it for Lucy that she had learnt in a school which taught the blessedness of putting self last. In her husband's uneasiness she for the moment forgot her own.

"Go after him, directly!" she said, dashing away her tears. "If he can speak as he does of Grace in her trouble, I am sure he has a tender heart, and knows what it is. Don't mind me—I am going to unpack and help Mrs. Ellis."

And not till he was quite out of hearing did she give vent to the burst of weeping which she had hitherto held back. So ardently as she had looked forward to that evening—so happy as she had felt the moment they arrived—and now—if it were not for Joel, she should be miserable! In the meanwhile, Joel had followed his friend: who, with his gun on his shoulder, was just commencing to patrol the exterior of the premises. As Treherne would have spoken, Martin lifted a finger.

"Now then, Bob," he said, imperatively, "time to turn in! Look sharp!"

The slouching figure of his adherent came out of the darkness at the word of command, and obediently entered the house. Martin watched him up the stairs, and then came back to Joel.

"Why did you not stay to cheer up your poor little wife?"

"Because my mate wants me more at this moment. She could see that directly; women always do. How has it been with you, Ironhand? You have heard and seen nothing queer to shake your nerves?"

"What do you think my nerves are made of? The sight of a woman's tears knocks all the fight out of me. That poor thing, Grace, had it all her own way—I could do nothing against her, as she put it to me. However, I have kept him out of this house—he has done his best to get in, and it didn't answer."

"What possessed you to take on that fellow Medland?"

"I can hardly say; but I rather think I have puzzled them by doing it. He, of course, reports to his parents all he sees, and probably a good deal he doesn't see; and it tends to keep them away. People know now that I have a fidgety trick of letting fly at any doubtful object within range, and they don't fancy a peppering, even by mistake."

"Then you don't really trust him?"

"Trust him! No, indeed. But I know he is safer inside, under my eye, than outside under other people's; and he has shown a kind of crouching attachment to me, in spite of being tampered with, that I may raise into something. I have kept him sober, and got a good bit of work out of him; which is more than Madam could do, at any rate."

"You have seen a good deal of that pleasant old lady?"

"I have been backwards and forwards, to please the young one, poor child—and to speak to Miss Kerr."

"I hope they made it pleasant to *her*."

"She looked bright enough. She is made of brightness, I think."

"She has had a taste of dark weather, too. At least, she had when we first saw her."

"Ah, I have thought since, if I could but have laid a finger on one of those fellows in Paris, I'd have made him remember that morning. So slight a thing as she is, you wouldn't suppose she had so much in her, but it is wonderful what she can do with those little

hands, all cleverness to their very tips; and her head is full of ideas, and histories out of books, and yet she is as simple as a child in some things—more of a child than that poor girl for whom we found the nugget. It went to my heart to see how tender Alice was with her, just treating her infirmity as something too pitiful to be angry with, or laugh at. The grandmother noticed it too, for I have seen the tears in her eyes when she was watching them."

The reticent Ironhand seemed to have changed his nature, and Joel, who had lighted his pipe while listening, drew conclusions with every fresh whiff. The voice, the language, the sentiments were all softened by the intercourse with ladies; and yet there was a sadness about it all, as if the hunter felt in earnest what he had so scornfully expressed—that between him and them lay a chasm that he could not overleap.

The gale had gradually gone down; the rain was only pattering gently among the leaves. There was every prospect of a quiet night and fine morrow. Martin took pains to show his companion all his fastenings and precautions, that he might attend to them should he be absent. More than once, he stopped to listen, holding his gun ready; but nothing occurred that seemed even to justify such watchfulness. It struck Joel in rather a ludicrous light; and when they were again in the house he intimated as much.

Martin made no answer, but beckoned him into the hall and showed him the old clock.

"What would you have thought to see me sitting in front of that with a six-shooter in my hand?"

"That you had found a new way to kill time," said Joel, smiling. Martin smiled in return.

"Well, when it came to this—that a clock, which wouldn't strike when I left the house, was striking like mad when I got back—it really seemed as if time did want looking after."

He described the scene, and Joel's smile passed away into grave earnestness. "Let us have a look at the inside."

The holiday scheme agreed upon by Philip and David Forrest had been actually carried out; and on the day following that of Mrs. Salisbury's departure, Dr. Nelson was taken by surprise—the brothers walking into his surgery as if they had stepped across the road to consult him about some trifling attack. His pleasure in greeting such old friends was of the mixed nature common to busy practitioners; he insisted on their leaving the inn directly, and making his house their own, and then had to trust to their entertaining themselves as best they might, being summoned in the middle of his dinner to drive a few miles in the dark. However, to men who wanted brain rest, the hills and valley of the Level were refreshment enough in themselves, and they were out before sunrise, drinking new milk, and making friends with the early labourers; and so effectually tiring themselves long be-

fore breakfast that, but for very shame, they could have gone to bed again. Their host, who had been up nearly all night, took the morning hours more quietly, only appearing as the letters were delivered. Intent on his hospitable duties, he was laying them aside, when his eye was caught by Mrs. Salisbury's handwriting. A misgiving of evil made him open it at once and run his eye over the contents.

"My dear Doctor,—I know your friendship for me will pardon my making you a sharer of my trouble. I am in great trouble—how great I cannot explain; but some of it you can imagine for yourself, when I tell you that between Highlevels and London I was robbed of my jewel-box, and that in so ingenious a manner that it has quite shaken my nerves. The box, which, as far as I know, was never left unwatched, was exchanged for another looking so like it that my old eyes never detected the fraud till I tried to unlock it this morning. How it was done, how the thief obtained a sight of the original cover (for it was that which was so well imitated) and how the actual exchange was effected, we have still to ascertain. At present my judgment is at fault; I feel as if I could trust nobody. We have kept it from our poor child, and shall do so as long as we can. Her father is gone to consult the police authorities as to the safest method of proceeding, whether by open reward or secret negotiation. I leave that to him at his particular request, his daughter being the party most interested in the matter, but to you I must confide a part of the story that gives me serious anxiety.

"You remember prescribing, at my request, for Grace Pyne: that quiet, respectable young woman who is now at Lowlevels. She came all the way to the station to see Miss Kerr before she started, and was of great service to Bilson in looking after our luggage. Our anxiety to keep poor Myra from drawing attention to the jewel-box by her remarks, made me leave it in Bilson's keeping, while we amused the child until the train came up. Bilson's account is that she wanted to get some change at the booking-office, and asked Grace to guard the box till her return. We had some time to wait, and Bilson says that she left Grace alone about ten minutes. At any rate, they brought it to the carriage between them, and a minute or two before the train started we saw Grace rush past towards the further end, but for what object we could not tell. She was not on the platform as we moved away. The box was carried up into my room in these lodgings, the door of which I kept locked. Sir Jesse having made an appointment with his friend the R.A. to come and inspect the picture, it was necessary that the diamonds should be unpacked, and it was in attempting to do this that I discovered my loss. The cover, the strap, the address, had all been so well imitated, that some one must have been in the plot; the only thing overlooked was a piece of scarlet ribbon, which Alice Kerr tied on at the last moment.

"If you ask me what my own feelings are at this moment, I can

truly say that the pecuniary loss, though irreparable, is the lightest part of my trouble. The diamonds were to be Myra's portion, and I have struggled hard to save them for her, but to myself they are only a hoarded memory, and one full of pain. It is the thought of treachery that oppresses me most—the self-reproach for having imprudently put too strong a temptation in a fellow-Christian's way, and the dread of casting suspicion on one who may be innocent. I can write no more—my hand and eyes are alike failing me. I trust to your prudence as well as to your kindness; if you can find out anything for me, you will. I am haunted by the recollection of the civil stranger, calling himself a London police-officer, whom Bilson believes to have been an old acquaintance of Grace Pyne's. Find out if he is still in your neighbourhood."

"Why, Frank, old man, do all your patients send you such formidable reports of their cases? Drawing Priam's curtains at dead of night was a joke to this. Courage, man! Has the plague broken out, or what?"

"A plague spot has appeared certainly, Philip, but it is more in your way than mine. I shall be glad of your advice."

He explained the business and showed them the letter. David Forrest bounded in his chair as he read. "Grace Pyne!" he shouted. "Why, she is one of my guild—as good a girl as ever breathed. I would as soon suspect Thirza. Come, Phil, make haste with your breakfast, and we'll be off to Frank's place: or rather, Bruce's, as they say she is there. Whoever has played the trick, you will see Grace Pyne had no hand in it, poor girl."

"I hope not. But one thing I must tell you, Davie, which I heard last night," said the doctor: "she did not go back to Lowlevels. A fellow Martin sent with her declares she went off in the train His word is not worth much; but, there is the fact—she is gone."

"And this person mentioned in the letter—the civil stranger—what of him?"

"What, indeed! He went by the same train."

There was a thoughtful silence. The holiday of the two mission-priests was over: they could think of nothing but the question before them. To go off to Lowlevels and consult Martin was the first decision arrived at, and only prevented by the appearance of Martin himself. He had heard of the disaster from Miss Kerr, and his present visit was to ask the doctor to call and see Mrs. Treherne, who had been fretting all the day before about her sister, and had taken a chill besides, according to the nurse's account; and the news that morning had made her quite ill. Dr. Nelson promised to go, and inquired if Grace had written? Not a line, but they had put a little pressure on Bob Medland, and he had owned rather more than he would at first. The Londoner, with whom he had been secretly on very friendly terms, had met him near the station, and persuaded him

—how, it did not much matter—to do a little job for him. He was to go to the room where Miss Pyne was waiting, and to ask her if that was her pocket-handkerchief—showing her one wrapped up in paper. If she knew it again, Bob was to say that the person who brought it was taken suddenly ill outside, and begged her to go to him for a moment. That he did his errand, and that Miss Pyne looked dreadfully upset and as white as a ghost, and begged him to stay in the room till she came back, and then went off like the wind. His curiosity induced him to follow her: but he could not make out where she went, and knew nothing more till the train passed him, when he caught sight of her face at a window, looking like death. A strange, confused statement, intermingled with sundry equivocations and vows of penitence, all betraying the fact that the speaker had been indulging in his favourite sin; but with sufficient truth in the outline to confirm previous suspicions as to the author of the fraud, and the cause of Grace's disappearance. A council was held by the three gentlemen, in which Martin took part, with a disregard of his usual punctilio, that showed how entirely he had forgotten himself in his interest for others. If they had been seated round a camp fire in consultation about a lost trail, he could not have spoken more freely, or been more at his ease. On being asked what Miss Kerr had written, he brought out a well-used pocket-book, in which Alice's letter had been carefully stowed away after the contents had been learned by heart. It was the first he had ever received from a lady, and it was almost reluctantly that he allowed it to be touched by those to whom it seemed a very ordinary matter. The writing was large, bold, and irregular—looking, David Forrest observed, as if the young lady had been using her brush instead of her pen.

"She can handle both," said Martin, rather resentfully: "and a burnt stick into the bargain, if she can get nothing better."

"It looks like it," said David, quite unaware of giving offence. "But she is quick-witted, and I am very much disposed to think she is on the right track."

He read the letter aloud.

"Greville Gardens, May —.

"Dear Mr. Martin,—You will be surprised at hearing from me, though I promised you should if I wanted anything done. I have just been to see Mrs. Salisbury, according to appointment, and found, to my horror, that her diamonds had been stolen. Only fancy the box being changed at the station, and her only discovering the fact the next day! The state that Myra was in about the jewels compelled us to keep the box out of her sight, and it was popped into the carriage almost at the last moment, and hidden under the seat. But for that I might have seen that it had no scarlet ribbon, having tied a piece on myself. My time was taken up with Myra and her cards; we gambled

for enormous sums on scraps of paper nearly the whole way, to prevent her making mysterious signs and drawing everybody's notice. You will hear the story from Dr. Nelson, but I want you to be the one to tell Grace, and to assure her that no one in their senses would ever think it was her fault. I *know* she is all right, though Bilson, whom I don't the least believe in, tries to make out that she must have known and helped the thief. Don't you remember my telling you I had heard *that* cough? I was sure some one was after the diamonds, and it was all so cleverly managed that it must have been your friend, Wily Wilkins. But who was it that helped him? That is the puzzle. *I* think it was Bilson herself, but I could not say so to Mrs. Salisbury. Direct to me here for the next few days. I do not know how this will affect my plans, but I found a note from Miss Ford telling me they were to start for the Continent in a week, and that I was to go with them to meet Mr. and Mrs. Bruce. I hope the diamonds will be heard of before I go.

"Yours very sincerely, "ALICE KERR."

"That is a daring hope," remarked Philip Forrest, as the letter was returned to Martin's pocket-book. "Depend upon it, the scheme has been too deeply laid."

"It *has* been deeply laid," said Frank Nelson. "What is more, it has been at work much longer than we can fathom at present. There is some mystery about those diamonds, and it is a very singular coincidence that they should disappear like this, just when I had prevailed on Mrs. Salisbury to have them thoroughly inspected. We are quite among friends, and I mention no names, but if we could arrive at any individual whose interest it was to prevent that inspection, it strikes me we should not be far from the trail of the railway robber."

There was a pause. It was first broken by Philip Forrest: who asked if the jewels had ever been out of their owner's keeping.

Yes, the late Lady Strahan wore them at a ball shortly before her last illness. It was well known at the time that there was a considerable unpleasantness between the widower and his mother-in-law about their restoration after her decease. Since that period they had always been in Mrs. Salisbury's possession.

"Then the last person, who had them in charge before, really was Sir Jesse Strahan—and his daughter was to inherit them."

"Exactly so: but her inheritance depended on the pleasure of the grandmother. They were no heirloom."

The recollection of certain hints thrown out by Mr. Herbert made the brothers look at each other significantly. Philip asked again if there was any clue to Sir Jesse's motive for wishing to retain the jewels.

Dr. Nelson only knew that the marriage had been an unhappy one, and that it was at her daughter's earnest entreaty, as a means of pleasing her tyrant husband, that Mrs. Salisbury lent her the diamonds. They were much talked about at the time, on account of

their size and beauty, and were supposed then to be Lady Strahan's own property.

"In fact," suggested David, "they were a voucher for her husband's solvency—supposing it to have been in doubt."

The same idea crossed all their minds. Philip remarked that they must be careful what they said, or even thought, without evidence.

Upon which Martin quietly rose and took up his hat. "I know where to get that evidence for you, Mr. Forrest. I shall be off by the night train. Have you any commission to St. Edmund's?"

"Why, Ironhand, what now? Whose evidence do you mean? Who knows Sir Jesse there?"

"Old Erasmus Martin."

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE BREAKING OF A BUBBLE.

Those whose experience of London has only been of the summer closeness, the early winter fog, or the late winter frost, have little notion of what the great city can look like on a really fine morning in May. We do not say that an east wind may not blow, as it probably will—but that does not matter; the bright sky, the sparkling water, the peculiarly vivid green of the trees, the stir of the busy life around you, whose pulses seem to be sharing in the renewed strength of spring-time, invest the whole with a charm which it would be hard to believe in on a dark November day. The difference that a week's warmth will make is one of those yearly marvels which never pall on the imagination; and Alice Kerr, returning to Greville Gardens from North Devon, felt the stimulus in every vein, and no longer wondered, as she had been doing, why the season should begin in May. True, nature was lovely then, and delightful the repose of the country; but here was the great stream of thought, and action, and power, rolling along to the still mightier sea, and the sound of its waters seemed to treble the energy of brain and hands — as if nothing could be impossible for art and genius to achieve with the world of London looking on.

She had awakened to find herself famous, in a manner of which she had never dreamed. The story of the abstracted jewels had given an immense interest to the drawing in which they were portrayed; and everybody who had the slightest acquaintance with anyone concerned was beset with applicants for introductions. The press had taken up the subject, and some flattering mention had been made of the picture and the "orphan heiress of that priceless heritage, a father's genius," and Sir Jesse, had it so pleased him, might have sold his bargain at a considerable profit. But as he observed, with his grave smile, a daughter's likeness was not exactly a marketable piece of goods. He was obliged, however, to admit the crowd

of visitors who thronged to see it, as well as to allow of its careful inspection by the police; but, as he said to friends in confidence, all this publicity was fatal to the recovery of the jewels; and as one element of attraction was the artist herself, he may have put a little pressure on the instruments by which she might be quietly taken out of the way. At any rate, Alice received an intimation from Miss Ford that they must start the next day, so as to accomplish their journey before the summer heat began; and half a dozen engagements made for her by the Carrolls must be given up, if she would not lose her opportunity of meeting Gabriel and Edith.

It was a great deal too bad, Tiny said, when she had got a lion to show, to carry it off just as it was in fashion. By the time she came back her story would be forgotten, and nobody would care whether they saw her or not. However, as it must be, they would make the most of their time; and perhaps her sudden withdrawal might create almost as much sensation as her presence. So she carried her young companion off to a large afternoon party, one of the most brilliant of the season; and Alice found so many people coming up to talk to her, that she was obliged, in self-defence, to bring up all her reserves of conversation, and knowing nothing whatever of fashionable politics, talked of things she liked herself, and was pronounced to be deliciously original. To all invitations, however, she had to return the fatal answer, "I am going abroad to-morrow," and as Tiny had foretold, this added to the zest with which she was pursued. It was all very pleasant at first, but Alice was growing rather tired of being drawn out, when, to her great satisfaction, Hartley Carroll made his appearance and took her at once under his special care. She thought he looked rather fagged and worried, and wondered at his giving himself the trouble to come to so crowded a party after his day's work; she did not guess that he had a nervous fear of being missed, and of its being supposed that this was from any serious reason. On her expressing her wonder aloud he only laughed, and said she looked the more tired of the two.

"Come in here, and have some strawberry ice—or strawberries and cream, whichever will spoil your dinner most to your satisfaction. What a thing it is to be able to forestall one's pleasures in this way, and get tired of a thing before it is in season! You are just in time to eat your strawberries before they are vulgar."

"That is what I cannot understand," said Alice—"why a thing should not be just as good when there is plenty of it."

"You would soon understand it, though, if all these good people suddenly began to take as clever likenesses as yourself, or if everybody's grandmamma had a Begum's parure to lend and lose. Rarity is a point we cannot afford to overlook; and you evidently know it as well as I do, by your running away to-morrow."

"That is Miss Ford's doing. She is afraid of the weather becoming too hot."

"I should not wonder if she had made London too hot already for poor Burlington. Fancy there being people in the world—some of them, most likely, eating early strawberries here at this moment,—who are base enough to bet that she will never marry your great friend till the diamonds turn up again!"

"But the diamonds were not his, so he could not give them to her."

"Their not being his had nothing to do with it; he never regards trifles of that description. It might rather add to the pleasure of giving them away. Ah, Miss Brassingham," as an elderly lady, her age wonderfully concealed by her well-preserved complexion and handsome dress, advanced, "I missed you yesterday, and am in arrear with news in consequence. What is the last great discovery?"

"That the Salisbury diamonds have been found in a carpet bag on Hammersmith Bridge. I assure you somebody said so just now—or something nearly as true. What has become of Clare?"

"What, indeed? I have no means of knowing, not having seen her since the morning."

He caught a suggestive glance from the lady, and introduced Alice, whom Miss Brassingham greeted most cordially.

"Find us seats, Hartley, for pity's sake, and let me have a talk with this clever little creature in something like comfort. You wonderful person, how did you contrive that likeness of good Thirza Forrest? I never saw anything better done—the way that cap sits on her head, as if it would slip over her nose the next minute, is as inimitable as the forced wakefulness of her eyes. You can see she is trying not to go to sleep, and I am sure she must have had a nap sometimes, in spite of you."

"I was rather glad of her naps," said Alice, with perfect truth; "they gave me time to draw the details. I could idealise her expression, but not her cap. That I had to copy exactly, for it was beyond my skill to invent."

"And you call that idealising, do you? It is well to know what those grand words mean. In Myra Strahan's likeness you seem to have gone to a queer school for your ideality. I only wonder you didn't sketch in the Tempter looking over her shoulder. Hartley, there, would have got him to sit to you."

"Thank you," said Hartley, coolly, "my interest in that quarter is gone. You must ask Miss Ford."

"Poor dear Helen! It is well she does not hear you. I am told they had an unpleasant quarter of an hour when she heard the diamonds were gone. She has left off believing in anybody, so he may talk for ever to no good. Those jewels are the most unlucky I ever heard of. Of course you know all about them, Miss Kerr?"

"Their size and setting I know pretty well: but not their story."

"Then you are in luck, at any rate," said Hartley, "for here sits the oracle to whom no story, to anyone's credit or otherwise, is ever altogether unknown. The marvellous gift of biography

photographic principles was hers, I may say, from her cradle. Not that I ever had the pleasure of seeing her in it; but fame declares that she was the terror of governesses and elder sisters as a walking register of everything they said or did—especially of what they would rather not have registered at all. Confess, cousin Maude, that I am only doing you faint justice."

"Very faint indeed. I am no more of a gossip than my neighbours. It is much safer to know a little about the people you are with, than to go blundering about among their cupboards, letting out the skeletons when they are least looked for. And some people's skeletons are really awkward pieces of anatomy—specimens that Frankenstein might have put together; and as difficult to deal with as his own. If Miss Kerr pleased, I have little doubt she could tell us that she heard the rattling of bones at Highlevels.

"Yes," said Alice, ingenuously, "there was a mystery, I thought, about a picture I copied; but I did not like to ask questions."

Miss Brassingham did not rest till she knew the whole. "Of course, my dear, I see who *that* must have been—the pretty lady's-maid, whom she brought up and trained herself, just for her two boys to fall in love with. Of anyone else I should say it was a weak foolish thing, but Mrs. Moreton Salisbury is neither, and never could have been. The girl grew up much prettier than she expected, I daresay; and after her husband's death (he was an invalid for some years, a younger son of Baron Moreton's, the famous judge, and took her name on their marriage) the lads had matters very much their own way: and a curious way it was. The eldest was all for sport and amusing himself; his brother was scientific, and philosophical, and odd, and they nearly ran through the estate between them. Myra's mother was much younger than either. Well, the long and the short of the story is, that the young lady was admired by both brothers, and encouraged them both. The eldest went to his mother, and declared he would marry her; of course she objected, and sent the girl away to a friend's house. And there, it appears, the philosopher found her in tears, and it ended in *his* marrying her, keeping it a secret as long as he could, while he was straining every nerve to earn an independence. An old friend of his father's, a civil engineer, forwarded his views, and the young man was so clever that he actually patented some invention or other, which brought him in a good sum, and then he confessed the truth to his mother, and she was very good to him, and invited them down to Highlevels. His elder brother was in bad health; it was plain he could not live long: and the young woman fancied she was going to be lady of all she saw, and get the diamonds; and she did so comport herself towards high and low that the mother's patience failed her at last. Actually, Desmond Salisbury was worked upon by his wife to ask for the jewels—things he would never have looked at except for scientific purposes; but for peace and quiet he chose to

do what he must have known was disgraceful, and the wind-up was a breach between mother and son. Desmond went back to London, dropped the family name, and was known only by his father's; and though his wife died soon after, he made no attempt to conciliate his mother. His old friend the engineer, who had made a good fortune himself, and helped to make his, had so high an opinion of him that he took his part in the matter, and left him trustee to his daughter—a bad business for the daughter, as it turned out. Desmond speculated—got into difficulty—used the trust-money to get out of it, and swamped nearly the whole. I don't know the rights of the business, for his friends and Miss Wyatt's combined together to hush it up as much as possible. His mother only knew a part, and did all she could to rescue his name, but was not able to save him from the results of his folly. In a fit of despair he suddenly absconded, and that with so much precaution that no clue to his whereabouts could ever be obtained. It was years afterwards that an Australian paper contained the announcement of his death; and in reply to all the inquiries made in consequence, nothing could be ascertained. The announcement had been sent anonymously, with the remittance, and the paper had been destroyed. If anyone out there knew the secret, it was well kept, and nothing more was ever discovered. The only person who might have known something was Sir Jesse Strahan, who had been Desmond's friend; but though he professed to be as anxious as a friend ought to be, his anxiety led to nothing but his ultimately marrying the young sister, very much against her mother's wish. She was then the only child left to her, and shared some of her second brother's eccentricity; which, perhaps, made her mother afraid to oppose her too strictly. The marriage was not a happy one; that I know from the best authority; and for any flightiness on poor Myra's part the gentleman may thank himself. The unlucky diamonds, as everybody knows, were worn by his wife at a great ball, but everybody may not know that it was at her passionate entreaty that they were lent for the occasion—Mrs. Moreton Salisbury fearing for the effect on her mind if she refused."

"Had Mr. Desmond Salisbury, or Moreton, any family?"

"I believe there was a child that died; I do not know if there were any more. Here comes Sir Jesse himself. I wonder if he has anything to tell us. We were just talking of you, Sir Jesse, and reckoning how soon you would run your highwayman down. I am sure you have the genius of a minister of police."

"Even they are at fault sometimes, Miss Brassingham. I regret to say I have discovered nothing yet. Oh, Carroll, I am glad to see you here. It looks as if that report I heard were not true."

Hartley made a desperate effort to laugh. "Which of the hundred and one reports do you mean, that are let fly one day and called in the next?"

"I only alluded to that——" The rest was inaudible to all but

Hartley himself, who shrugged his shoulders and smiled; speaking soon after to Alice apart.

"You missed a grand opportunity just then: the Adversary in the famous piece of the 'Chess-player' must have been modelled from some belonging of Strahan's. Bruce has the good angel at his elbow—that is a point on his side. So you really start to-morrow?"

"Really. Have you any commission?"

"Yes. Tell them both to make the most of their happiness, and to come back as soon as they conveniently can. I don't mind telling you in confidence, Tiny misses her sister; and when the weather grows sultry, I should like her to go down to Lowlevels. What has become of the Ironhand, do you know?"

"I had a formal little note from him in answer to mine, beginning, 'Erasmus Martin respectfully thanks Miss Kerr for the honour of her letter,' and going on to say he was on the point of returning to London with the Reverend Mr. Forrest, to inquire, among other things, after Grace Pyne, who had left them without any explanation, and was last seen in our train. Nothing will ever make me believe that Grace had a hand in the robbery—nothing."

"What is the programme for to-night?"

"Oh, have you not arranged to go with us? Clare said you would take us to see that new piece at the Triumph Theatre, which everybody is talking about. You will, won't you?"

"I can refuse you nothing. To be talked about by everybody, is to be too attractive for me to resist. There is Tiny looking nearly as fast asleep as Miss Thirza. We must get her out of all this as fast as we can."

It was a real success, that fairy piece at the little striving Triumph; the manager had been happy enough to discover a rising dramatist, with a freshness of thought and vivacity of style as yet unhackneyed by constant work, and with a gift of graceful verse, principally humorous, but varied here and there by a pathetic touch which went straight to the hearts of those who had laughed a minute before. The satire was good-natured, the sentiments were generous, the framework of the story was well suited to the appliances of the stage, and the parts, being written expressly for the Triumph company, had the rare fortune of pleasing them. From the first representation of the Fairy Bubbles it had been evident that a "hit" had been made at last; the great object now was to get as much profit out of it as possible, and this could only be satisfactorily done by having numerous performances. Not only did it run night after night, but morning representations for children were also in great favour; and it would have been hard to say, sometimes, which scene looked the more attractive, the stage or the audience. Truly, never did fairies meet with such sweet believers to gaze at and admire them as the children, whose musical laughter ran round the house, with the

accompaniment of clapping hands that might have been the cymbals of Titania's court. From beginning to end these gazers believed in it all—in the long-bearded philosopher, who made such a droll speech while preparing the soap and water for blowing bubbles, he having exhausted every other occupation; in the fairy Saponia herself, who came in behind his chair, and touched the soapsuds with her wand; and above all, in the bubbles when they came rising out of the darkness, growing larger and brighter, and more full of rainbow tints, till each slowly opened, and a fairy came out all silver and dazzling colours, making one of a group that performed all sorts of pleasant tricks on the rest of the personages—showing the Prince how to find the talisman, and helping the Princess to put the tyrant to sleep while they whisked away with all his treasure. Wonderful fairies they, with each her own particular bubble, into which she skipped when danger appeared, and floated away nobody knows where; and wonderful too were the verses they spoke, in which, with plenty of satire on the whims and speculations of the day, was mingled such an archness of wit and smartness of repartee that the lines were caught up and remembered, to be the joy of many a private performance for many a day to come.

What a life it was, thought the children, to be dressed in that starry, silvery stuff, that looked like anything but stupid clothes—to have wings on your shoulders, and stars on your forehead, and to run in and out among those bewitching lights, and float through that mysterious red fire, and have everybody clapping and admiring you. Happy, beautiful fairies! How they envied the princess's clever favourite, who was on such intimate terms with the fairy queen, and, like Morgiana in the Forty Thieves, was more than a match for any number of villains, in jars or out of them. Her acting really was good, and she had a drolly serious way of uttering her puns, as if they took her so much by surprise that she had to stop and think about them, which fairly carried old and young by storm. Again and again had she to pause and curtsey in acknowledgment of the applause; and if her royal mistress, who clung to her so trustingly, could but have had her own way, it is to be feared the favourite slave would then and there have been made to feel the danger of popularity. Many a black look and sharp word had already passed between them behind the scenes, before that happened which for a time made even Envy dumb. There was one special fairy in whom the audience took peculiar pleasure, so genuine was the comedy in her gestures and by-play. Between her and the favourite there was always a happy understanding; and a popular colloquy, in which they argued about the respective merits of their mistresses, never failed to win an encore. On one of these occasions—it was during a morning performance before a crowded house—the encore was not immediately responded to, and even while the applause was growing louder and more urgent, the favourite, contrary to her cue, began to

hurry her companion towards the side scene. It was thought at first to be a fit of obstinacy, and all the young gentlemen in pit and gallery waxed more uproarious in consequence; but the uproar was soon checked by the fall of the curtain, cutting short the unfinished act. The manager came forward to bespeak the indulgence of the public—one of their young ladies having been taken ill, a substitute would be found and the piece resumed as soon as possible; and he was sure that every allowance would be kindly made by so considerate an audience.

The audience responded, as of course such an audience would, and all passed off quietly; many tender little hearts being sorely divided between the amusement of the rest of the play, and their pity for the poor fairy who could not enjoy it too. It was only the elders who detected in the acting and voice of the popular favourite the excitement of an agitation which made her comedy almost melodramatic—so fierce were some of her gestures, so rapid at times did her utterance become.

The evening papers announced with regret that Mademoiselle Honora Salviati, one of the most talented artistes of the company, had unfortunately broken a blood-vessel during the performance, and was lying in a perilous state at the nearest hospital. No blame could be attached to the management, and every attention was being shown by the medical authorities. Her place was already filled up, and the Bubbles would go on till further notice, as if nothing had happened.

Two or three days had passed, and Mr. Harper was passing through one of the wards under his care, when he heard a weak voice, which had been forbidden all exertion, whispering a piteous "Doctor, dear." With a kind word of caution he turned to the bed whence the voice proceeded, and took his seat beside it, with his hand on Honor's fluttering pulse. He saw she had something she wished to say, and that it would be nearly as dangerous in her state to check her entirely as to allow her to speak. Her hollow eyes fastened on his with a feverish earnestness, in which was no delirium; it was the pressure of a maddening thought that would not let her rest, and wrung from her lips that mournful appeal for sympathy.

"Docther, dear"— her accent grew more national as her eagerness to speak increased—"is it dying I am?"

"I cannot tell you, my poor girl; I hope for the best, if you will do as you are told, and keep quiet. I have obtained leave for your sister to come to you to-morrow, so you will enjoy your Sunday if you are good now."

"I daren't tell Caterina. She is breaking her heart over me as it is; but if I say to her what I want to say, she will be right mad. Docther, you'll never let her know I told you, will you, now?"

He promised, and kindly bent down that she might whisper in his ear.

His face grew very serious as he listened: only his professional self-command kept him silent. When she paused, he soothed her with kind promises and assurances of secrecy; and then hastened to despatch the rest of his duty as quickly as his conscience would allow.

A cab was at the door of the hospital as he came out. He sprang in, with a hasty order. "Drive to St. Edmund's Mission House, and be as quick about it as you can!"

(To be continued.)

LIFE AND DEATH.

"WHAT is Life, father?" "A battle, my child,
Where the strongest lance may fail,
Where the wariest eyes may be beguiled,
And the stoutest heart may quail.
Where the foes are gathered on every hand,
And rest not, day nor night,
And the feeble little ones must stand
In the thickest of the fight."

"What is Death, father?" "The rest, my child,
When the strife and toil are o'er;
The Angel of God, who, calm and mild,
Says we need fight no more:
Who driveth away the demon band,
Bids the din of battle cease;
Takes the banner and spear from the failing hand,
And proclaims an eternal peace."

'Let me die, father! I tremble and fear
To yield in that terrible strife."
"The crown must be won for heaven, dear,
In the battle-field of Life.
My child, tho' thy foes are strong and tried,
He loveth the weak and small;
The Angels of Heaven are on thy side,
And God is over all."

SUNDAY OUT.

I AM conscious that in expressing the opinion that a Sunday out is one of the most aggravating minor evils with which Providence afflicts the human race I am running entirely counter to one of the accepted traditions of the English people. The authority of the gifted author of "Sally in our Alley" may be quoted against me, and Mr. Hood's verdict will be supported by innumerable namesakes of the heroine of that poem. Let me therefore premise that I am not writing this sketch from the domestic servant's point of view, but as the representative of a far humbler portion of society—viz., of those young briefless barristers, Government clerks, somethings in the City at nothing per annum, whose main use in life appears to me to be to point morals, to be reviled by the *Daily Telegraph* for not marrying on £300 a year, and to be described by the writers of social sketches in the weekly papers as useless encumbrances to the earth. In the name of these, my much-enduring colleagues, I take up my parable and denounce Sundays out.

Like many of my class I am blessed with numerous relatives and friends possessing small places within fifty miles of London, who are most diligent in their kind invitations to me to "come down for a Sunday." I am, I am thankful to say, gifted with excellent health, and can support even the toil of a Government office through the week without absolutely breaking down on the Saturday. But to judge from the anxiety of some of my kind friends that I should come and get a little fresh air, the labour must tell upon me more than I myself perceive, and the remedy, habitually prescribed for my complaint is, a Sunday in the country.

Now, Fate has willed it that the vast majority of my hosts either live on branch lines of railway, necessitating one or more changes of carriage to arrive at one's destination, or else at a spot attainable by several lines of railway—to counterbalance which advantage no line has a convenient dinner or morning train; whilst my few friends who are in neither of these predicaments select their domiciles about four miles from the station, and don't send to meet me.

I will then ask the reader kindly to accompany me mentally, and go down to A. Hall with me from Saturday to Monday.

After the delightful process has been accomplished of ascertaining from which of the Waterloo platforms my train starts, I immerse myself in the study of the evening paper, in the perusal of which I am seriously interrupted by two lady fellow-travellers—one of whom wants the window (my window) a little up, whilst the other desires it to be totally down. The consequence is that I pass a mauvais quart d'heure between the harrowing spectacle of one fair dame

shivering ostentatiously, and another parading a show of suffocation. Conversation, I need not add, there is none. Am I not one of those wolves in sheep's clothing, a young man, and, as such, out of the pale of travelling humanity?

So I am thankful when Crupley Junction is reached, and am resigned to even twenty minutes' wait in that delightful station as a preliminary to fifteen minutes' agony in a filthy smoking-carriage. But even a South-Western journey comes at last to an end, and I arrive at the little platform of Heire. How joyfully do I descend and summon the hobbledehoy who is charged with the regulation of the traffic at this important point.

"Porter," I remark, handing him my valise, "I suppose there's a trap to meet me from A. Hall?"

The porter disappears through the door, and I suddenly become conscious that if any vehicle were in attendance it would be plainly visible from where I stand. Hang it! Uncle B. can't have made any mistake—he told me this was the best train to come by, and he said he'd send to meet it. But the porter returns and confirms the melancholy fact that Mr. B. has not sent. He looks so sympathetic as he says this that I feel the presentation of sixpence is incumbent on me. This satisfies him, but does not otherwise advance matters. Now, what's to be done? The porter, whose interest in me has already flagged, doesn't know. No more do I. I consequently sit down and wait half an hour on the chance of something turning up, but with as little success as Mr. Micawber. It is needless to say that at Heire station flys are unknown, and it seems to me that the porter is getting sulky at my protracted stay in the station. At length it becomes clear that I must quit, and as Velveteens holds out no hope of being able to send my valise up to A. Hall in time for dinner I must e'en carry it myself. I proceed to the task—a walk of two miles on a hot evening. Not even a friendly boy is to be obtained until within a quarter of a mile of the house, when two urchins almost tear my valise from me and insist upon receiving a shilling a piece remuneration. I ascertain, subsequently, that my hostess did send to meet me, but to another station some mile and a half further from the Hall and to which there was no earthly reason I should go.

But Mrs. B. had some shopping to do at Rumshall, and with true feminine logic thought her guest might by some intuition discern this fact and shape his route accordingly. I merely mention this en passant to explain why I found it necessary to bestow five shillings on the groom when he returned some hours later to the Hall, having waited for the last train from town.

But to resume. Mr. B. greets me with effusion. "Charley, my dear boy, I'm so glad to see you! How are all your people?—quite well—that's right. So glad you were able to come to us—we don't make a stranger of you, you know—there's no party here—but

the boys are all at home for an exeat—and I daresay you'll manage to amuse yourself."

My prospect of enjoyment becomes even fainter. If there is one thing I abominate more than another it is a gang of schoolboys at home for a holiday. I am not a misanthrope; but does any man derive amusement from being consigned to the mercies of "the boys" —having to carry the wretches' stumps to the cricket-field, mark out the ground for them, and be privileged to bowl or longstop for them throughout the afternoon? Or, if they are aquatic, where's the fun of lugging twenty stones' weight of boys three miles against a strong stream, *down* which the youngsters have so gleefully floated?

Then is it appetising for a man, accustomed to dine at his club like a Christian, to be stuck down—perhaps to carve—before a bullock roasted whole—and a mass of jam and suet—the eternal food of the rising generation?

Such is the prospect which, not for the first time, displays itself to my melancholy contemplation. But my host interrupts my reflections. "Well, Charley, you know your room—don't you?" Oh yes, I should think I did know my room. Top of the house—broken bell-pull, and munificently stocked with all the invalided pieces of furniture in the mansion—smoking strictly prohibited, an exception being only made in winter in favour of the chimney. Thither, however, do I proceed, and array myself in evening garb. In the drawing-room I find Mrs. B. and a lady who reminds me of boiled gooseberry pudding. "Charley, let me present you to Fräulein Donner und Blitzen." Then aside to me, "She's Fanny and Mary's new governess—a very superior person."

Now, I do hate a superior person—especially when she's a German. If she'd only have been inferior and a Briton! Crash goes the door, and in rush the three B. boys, yelling as if a dinner was a novelty to them, and they were about to taste food for the first time. "Holloa! here's Cousin Charley,"—and I am set upon and pulled by these little brats with as little compunction as if I were a bag of cotton.

The announcement of dinner saves me from the double task of repelling these young demons and carrying on a scientific conversation in German with Fräulein Donner. I offer my arm to Aunt Jane with a real momentary feeling of affection, and escort her to that cheerless apartment—adorned with imaginary portraits of ancestors suffering pangs of indigestion in tight-fitting suits of armour—which modern society calls the dining-room.

Over the details of the repast I need not linger. All of my genus have undergone similar feasts, and have tasted the specialité port Uncles John produce when their olive branches are at home for the holidays. I am placed between Mrs. B. and the Fräulein. The former cross questions me as to how all the members of my family are, and opines that they all "look pale." As I am totally unable

to affirm or deny this proposition, she abandons me as a bad job; and I fall from Scylla into Charybdis—viz., into the jaws of the Fräulein, who wants me to explain in the Teutonic tongue the difference between Free Trade and Protection. I learn afterwards that she meditates inditing a letter to the *Kölnische Zeitung*, which shall effectually demolish the heresies of Herr Camphausen. I inwardly hope the *K. Z.* will not publish her lucubration, or Richard Cobden will rise from his grave to protest against the economical doctrines my limited knowledge of her lingo has compelled me to expound.

Matters don't mend after dinner. Uncle John wants to know what I think of the state of affairs in the East. Now, it's quite true I'm a Foreign Office clerk, but *is* it my business to think? I mean about foreign affairs, of course. Theatricals, balls, social scandals, it is my duty to be up in. But foreign politics! Why, what is Lord Derby paid for? I can't get my host to see this. So the after dinner séance comes to a brief termination, and we adjourn to the drawing-room.

As Mr. and Mrs. B. "don't make a stranger of me," the normal evening occupations of A. Hall are in full swing. Aunt Jane is working—knitting, tatting, crocheting, or some such inexplicable mystery. The gifted Teuton is giving us a "little"—a very little—music, in which the harmony achieved bears a very scanty proportion to the amount of elbow labour employed. Mr. B. goes to sleep, and I re-peruse last week's *Illustrated London News*. The boys sit round the inevitable circular table in the centre of the room, and kick each other's shins; but I regard their freaks with a tolerant eye, for I can see it riles my enemy the Fräulein. She is equal to the occasion, however, and takes a base revenge by inviting them to sing a hymn. Oh, heavens! Tom, Dick, and Harry sing a hymn! I gaze appealingly at her, but apparently only rouse her bile, for she inquires of my aunt if Herr Karl sings? However, his sons' performance does arouse Uncle John, who packs the artists off to bed peremptorily, and leads the rest of the party in funereal procession off to family prayers. The assembled retainers, unlike their master and mistress, do make a stranger of me, and criticise my apparel with such scornful glances as entirely distract my mind from the beauties of the Hebraic genealogies over which Uncle John is stumbling. Devotions ended, bed is the word. Bed at 10 P.M.!—for me, whose usual hour of retiring varies from 1 to 2 A.M. at the earliest. I can't go out and smoke, for fear of the big dog they always loose outside, whose kennel is at present lined with an Inverness cape, torn in earlier years from my shoulders, when I ventured out one inauspicious night; so I take up with a sigh "Paley's Evidences of Christianity," thinking what a living example I am of the doctrine of Christian endurance, and adjourn with this light work to my apartment. But to be just, I admit its perusal procures me three hours' extra sleep, for by 11 P.M. I am fast in the land of Nod.

Sunday, 7 A.M.—Rap, rap, rap, breaks feebly on my drowsy ear. "What the ——" I mutter, slowly arousing myself, "is the matter? What's Mrs. C. (my excellent landlady in town) up to, calling me at this unholy hour?" It is some minutes before the truth breaks upon me—that I am at A. Hall, and that my uncle breakfasts at eight, Heaven only knows why. He has a craze, too, against hot water, and I can't shave with cold—and his servants never can black boots properly. However, I get up, and splash into the tub. Like everything else here, it is new-fangled—a new invention, that makes it easy for the housemaid to empty into the slop-pail, but equally facile for its tenant to distribute over the carpet. So, at least, I find it; and it is only a modified consolation to me, viewing the lake on the floor, to hear a very audible "Ach Himmel" from the floor below, and to ascertain that Fräulein Donner und Blitzen is undergoing a visit from Jupiter Pluvius. Well, at all events she'll understand the commercial term "flooding the market" now. As the bell-pull is broken I can't summon assistance, and am compelled to devote all the towels to repairing damages, and descend to breakfast in no very amiable state of mind.

Country air gives one an appetite, and I welcome Uncle John's time-honoured joke that this house will now go into Committee of Supply with such hearty applause as merits a more ample—I had well-nigh made a pun and said liberal—return than I receive. An infinitesimal scrap of bacon, supplemented by an egg, is not sufficient for my requirements. The postman has conscientious scruples about delivering letters on Sunday, and as he is a "character," the residents don't make him deliver them. It appears to me that the only salient feature in his disposition is a disinclination to do his work. I could be as good a "character" as that. I mutter something to this effect, and am reproved by the Fräulein, who says, "Ach der arme mann." She doesn't see any harm in Bill Stokes loafing about the village and smoking his short pipe instead of delivering the letters; so why should she look at me reproachfully after breakfast, when I produce my cigar-case, and say, "Will Herr Karl nun rauchen?" I am getting angry, so I answer, "Ja I will," and I do. I have an hour's peace and tobacco before my three small cousins, looking as wretched as boys do in their go-to-meeting clothes, come to lug me off to church. It is getting insufferably hot for a two-mile walk, and it is rather aggravating to be told, "Well, Charles, you've young legs, and will look after the boys," and to see Mr. and Mrs. B., the gouvernante, and Fanny and Mary preparing to stow themselves away in a comfortable landau. Long before we've gone half way Tom has torn his jacket, scrambling over a hedge to avoid going through a gate; Dick has cut his finger, showing off his new knife; and Harry has tumbled into a ditch and muddied his trousers. What a rage Aunt Jane will be in!

Repairing damages causes us to be ten minutes late at the church,

and the clergyman, I feel, excludes the intruders from the benefits of the absolution he is pronouncing. The boys are summoned into the family pew, and I am consigned to the charge of the clergyman's elderly maiden sister, who will ostentatiously hand me hymn-books, though she knows, or at least soon finds out, that I can't sing. The clergyman gives us forty minutes without a check, on the distinction between the churches of Sardis and Thyatira, as an appropriate sermon for agricultural labourers' minds. When service is over, Mr. and Mrs. B. don't *say* anything to me, but the three dishevelled boys are stowed away in the carriage, and Mrs. B. *looks* at the knees of Harry's trousers, and then at her nephew, in a way that reduces my height by two feet at least. Under the circumstances the Fräulein has to walk home, and I—I have to escort her.

On Sunday the inhabitants of A. Hall dine early; why, I know not, unless to complete the misery of the day. Friends who have been stuck down before a steaming round of beef at 2 P.M. on a summer afternoon can imagine my sensations during the next two hours. The boys are in disgrace, and are not allowed to have pudding. I also am in disgrace, and am compelled to take some: hot plum-pudding—heavy suet, with plums rari nantes therein. Such is the reward of evil-doers. A walk is the next recreation held out to me; a compulsory promenade, to which the treadmill is a joke. I can tolerate turnips and patronise ploughs when foxes or partridges form a component part of the rural scene; but to walk with a relative in a tall hat and demeanour to correspond—to be accompanied by three small boys—to look for the tenth time at an aggravated molehill, and to be told it was the much-maligned Cæsar's camp—these are the sort of provocations which make one feel that a promenade in the country constitutes extenuating circumstances in the most aggravated case of uncle-slaughter.

Hot, head-achey, and heart-sick, I return to the culminating outrage that is in store for me at A. Hall. Gentle reader, need I say that I allude to a meat tea. The details of my sufferings hitherto, over which you have kindly cast a sympathising eye, have, I am conscious, been already too prolonged for me to have the right or the barbarity to dilate on this topic. Yet what does a meat tea mean? Pie—always pie—muffins and marmalade piled one after another on one small china plate. The domestics disapprove of much washing or tidying up on Sunday evening, so napkins are abjured, and the supply of knives and forks reduced to a minimum. No bad precaution, by the way, in Fräulein Donner's case, who applies her one blade in the usual Teutonic fashion to her mouth. The lower end of the table is taken up with an enormous tray full of teacups and a vast urn, which reduce the space of tablecloth allotted to my plate (I am sitting next Mrs. B.) to four inches. Conversation is difficult; the children are only supposed to talk on serious subjects, their inability to do which necessitates communication being carried on

by means of kicks under the table, several of which fall on my unaccustomed legs. I ask Aunt Jane if she has been at the Grosvenor Gallery, and she responds with as much horror as if I had specified the Argyll Rooms. Fräulein asks me if I have read Herr Dummkopf's "Principles of Cosmogony"—that doesn't lead to conversation. She says she'll lend it me though, which is a fresh damper on my spirits.

Tea ended, we adjourn to the drawing-room, and, heedless of black or rather religiously grey looks, I take up a newspaper—an old one it's true, but I can study the advertisements till bed-time. But my tormentor has a card in reserve. *Will Herr B. so gut sein als etwas zu lesen?* Here's the last straw. Uncle John's going to read an improving book aloud. Yes, by Jove, he is! Can I keep awake? Poppies are nothing to Uncle John's reading. Well, I shall soon know—that's one comfort. He takes down a dingy brown book, and begins to read about the sufferings of the early Christians. I am sure they were a joke to those of the present generation. "It is recorded," reads Mr. B., "of St. Scarificatus, that the excessive tortures to which he was subjected, in consequence of his conversion to Christianity, by members even of his own family, were so protracted and refined as ultimately to produce a state of coma, during which the holy man became perfectly insensible to the exquisite torments to which he was exposed." . . . . .

"I am sorry you were so very fatigued, Charley, with your walk, as to be unable to listen to the interesting account of St. Scarificatus which your uncle has been reading to us," says Aunt Jane, severely. "I am afraid your late hours in town are too much for your strength," and I suddenly become painfully conscious that I have missed hearing the finale of the early Christians' wars. I feel Mrs. B. has the better of me, and I shamble off to bed without attempting a vindication. Of course my drawing-room nap has spoiled my night's rest, and I have the pleasure of lying awake till 2 A.M., with the further knowledge that I am to be aroused at seven. For Mr. B. goes up to town by an 8.30 train, and cherishes an invincible delusion that it is essential for me to be equally matutinal.

The programme is carried out to the letter. I am aroused at seven, and do dress somehow, with tepid shaving water and other désagrémens. Breakfast is of course a scramble—or would be, if there were not a deficiency of viands to scramble for—and finally Uncle John announces his intention of going to the station by the short cut, a mile and a half over fields, impassable to wheels. "I suppose, Charley, my boy, you can carry your bag that far." The deuce he does. I ask him if he can't send it up in the course of the day, but he knows a trick worth two of that, and says he won't be sending in till Thursday. He is aware that I can't dispense with a tooth-brush till then, so he has me on the hip, and I have my valise on my shoulder. What a weight the simplest bit of solid leather is.

We just catch the train after a quarter of a mile's run: I purchase the daily paper with a sigh of intense thankfulness, and devote myself behind its columns to striking a balance between the pros. and cons. of a visit to A. Hall. The result of my calculation is roughly summarised in the annexed table:

Pros.	£	s.	d.
Benefit derived from fresh air (doubtful)			
Value of food, say . .	0	10	0
Benefits derived from improving conversation (very doubtful)			
Total. . .	0	10	0
Ascertained Balance in favour of Cons. .	£100	14	10

Cons.	£	s.	d.
Railway ticket . . .	0	7	10
Porter	0	0	6
Boys, for carrying bag .	0	2	0
Offertory in church . .	0	1	0
Fees to servants . .	0	10	0
Cabs in London . .	0	3	6
Aggravation caused by peculiarities of relation (doubtful, but extensive)			
Aggravation caused by Fräulein Donner . .	100	0	0
Total . . .	101	4	10

I feel that, as a business man, my visit must not be repeated, and for the tenth time I register a vow it shall not. London reached, I take a cordial farewell of my uncle, spring into a cab, and proceed to my lodgings, there to set out on paper to you, gentle reader, the woes attendant on a Sunday Out.

Flexibilis Incertus.

P.S.—I reopen this to say that I missed sending the packet to the printer last week, and that I have just received the following note:—

"Dear Charley,—I hope you will be able to come down to us again for next Saturday to Monday. We shall have no party, but I daresay you'll enjoy a quiet Sunday with us. Fräulein Donner desires kind remembrances. "Your affectionate aunt,

"Jane B."

Now, what am I to do? I suppose I must accept: or will "Vanity Fair" take mine up as a hard case, and solicit the opinions of its numerous readers on my position?

PASSAGES FROM THE LIFE OF A MATRON IN OLDEN TIMES.

(*From the German.*)

"AHUFRAU" (vaguely, ancestress) is the name by which in some parts of Suabia a grandmother, or great-grandmother, is designated, and under this title I would fain introduce an ancestress of my own, whose living image is still fresh in my memory.

Seldom has a whole lifetime been spent within so limited a space. From her first year of life, until her eighty-fourth, the same quiet little town had been the scene of her joys and sorrows: of her whole life-work. She had but seldom quitted the spot, and then only to make short visits to her family or her children. Yet how many different pictures were enframed within the limits of those city walls! What a fresh, warm-hearted disposition! What never-fading heart-flowers she contrived to keep in bloom on a soil one would have thought it scarcely possible to grow even the commonest of plants!

The Ahufrau, who, when I first knew her, was a little shrivelled-up old woman, had once been young and pretty, and she was nothing loth to have this known, more especially as the portrait of her in her youth, which still existed, was unhappily no masterpiece, and gave but a very inadequate impression of her early charms. And yet even in this picture—poor and badly-executed as it was—the clear blue eyes, and the rose placed in the blonde powdered locks, had so pleasing an effect that a countryman had once asked in admiration:

"But who, then, is this pretty young girl?"

"That was once myself, Jacob!"

"Yourself? Well, to be sure! how we do change."

And the good old Ahufrau had quite enjoyed this not very flattering remark—for though she was still a little vain (as who is not?) she was most of all vain of those vanished days, in which, indeed, she seemed to live and move to the very last.

The Ahufrau had married early, as was often the case in those days. But however young she may have been when she spoke that memorable "Yes," upon which her whole life had followed as a full and glad "Amen," she was not so young but that her heart had already experienced some little agitations of its own. I will leave her to relate for herself the sad and touching story of these first gentle heart-yearnings—if I can but remember it in her own words.

"You must know that I had a very happy childhood, although there were ten of us, brothers and sisters, and we had to do a great deal for ourselves; for my father was not rich, though his position was good, and we knew nothing of want or care. It is difficult

to realise the important position of a civil functionary in those days, particularly when he was like my father, who was always called upon to attend the Duke whenever he came to Stuttgart. Ah, yes, we were thought much of: even I myself held my head somewhat high, and little dreamed that here, in Nürtingen, under my father's jurisdiction, his son-in-law was also growing up!

"Well, it happened not unfrequently that learned and distinguished men came to my father's house, and we were quite accustomed to such visitors. But there was one who came sometimes—not often—whose coming made my heart beat as it had never done in my life before. And it happened, oddly enough, that whenever he came, whether walking or on horseback, I always chanced to be at the window and to see him. Every time he would look up and greet me: no matter whether I were in the kitchen, or at the lattice-window, or in the parlour, he always looked in the right place. But whenever he came to dine with us, I was always the last to join the party, for on those days I would take extra pains to dress becomingly, though all the while I was ashamed of myself for doing so.

"I only saw him at dinner-time, and I should just like to have seen my father if one of us had dared to speak at table unless first spoken to! But every now and then he would address his conversation to me, and then I blushed so much and felt so confused that I could hardly answer him. Besides, I never supposed that so handsome and distinguished a man would give so much as a thought to me. It was even reported that the Duke was about to attach him to his embassy. Only once I did think it—just a very little. He had been with my father, and was returning alone across the courtyard, just as I, mounted on the steps, was watering my plants. Even from that distance I saw that he was coming towards me, but I did not stir an inch, and went on plucking at a single roseleaf. But how I started when I heard his voice below me. 'What lovely rosebuds, Miss Caroline!'

"I did not know what to answer; scarcely even looked at him.

"'Is there not *just one* among them for me?' he continued. And, quick as thought, before I could recollect myself, I had cut off the loveliest of them all. But then I dared not give it to him; until at last he himself drew it gently from my hand, and saying with a smile, 'Thank you very, very much!' he went hurriedly away.

"What happened all the rest of that day I do not know. I believe I got a severe scolding from my mother for being dreamy, and it was as though a peal of bells were ringing in my ears.

"Next morning he rode over from 'The Swan.' The rosebud had opened during the night, and he had placed it in his button-hole.

"For many nights after that I could not sleep, and was terribly frightened lest any of my elder sisters should notice it.

"About a fortnight afterwards my father was away from home, and we had a grand house-cleaning. The whole house was turned

inside out; drawers and cupboards were emptied, and we were all out of doors with trustles and dust-cloths, scrubbing and polishing wardrobes, tables, and presses, and in great awe of the mother, who on these days was always in ill-humour and easily provoked.

"In the midst of it all came Bastel, the old town-carrier, and went past me up the staircase, asking, 'Where shall I find your mother? Here is a letter to the master; but it is a private one—not official.'

"'Upstairs, in the spare bedroom.'

"Bastel went up, and none of us asked about the letter.

"My father stayed away much longer than he had expected. He had been at home a couple of days, when one day, at dinner-time, he observed to my mother, 'Only think, Nanny: S. has arrived at the Austrian Embassy, and he has never so much as taken leave of us, either in writing or by word of mouth! Just the way with these distinguished men; but I should never have expected it of him.'

"My mother expressed her surprise, and my sisters too put in their word. As for me, I could not swallow another morsel, and that night I wept bitterly. Of course I had never really supposed that he would think again of me—but still, for all that, I was strangely hurt. After that no one mentioned him again, and I grew to think I must have been a very silly girl.

"Just then my now sainted husband, who had for some time back been my father's assistant, obtained the office of Recorder: no small thing, considering his youth. He came at once to my father and asked my hand. My father called me into his room, and solemnly opened the subject to me. 'You are at liberty to choose for yourself, Caroline,' he concluded; 'but I shall expect you to act reasonably, and accept the offer of this sensible and upright man.' So I saw how much free choice I should have in the matter, and that I dare not refuse. But still I *could not* bring myself to say 'Yes!'

"You see, though I had always had the greatest respect for him; he was a fine, stately-looking man, earnest and steady beyond his years, and very highly esteemed by my father; yet it had never occurred to me that *he* should ever be my husband, and now I felt as though it really *could not be!* But my father thought this was only pride in me because his parents were poor, and he spoke his mind to me about it very warmly: 'If you had even one sensible reason why you should refuse him I would not say another word.' But I had no sensible reason to give—only a very foolish one—so then I said, 'Yes,' in God's name, and prayed that He would make me to say it with a willing heart. And He did so; and I was very happy when I saw how everyone rejoiced, and how much my parents honoured my future husband, and me with him, so that now I might even talk at table just as freely as the mother herself. He did his utmost to prove his love for me, and to make me happy. But once, though with the best intention in the world, he signally failed and provoked me very much.

"A new residence had been assigned him—that fine large house which you know so well—and he was occupying it temporarily in order to get it furnished. Now I had long promised him that my mother and I would call upon him there, and we fixed our visit for a certain day. So mother and I set off together, across the market-place, I keeping on the inside, close up to the houses, for I was feeling very conscious. But, lo! all at once every window of the new house was thrown open, and the town trumpeter and all his band, with trumpets, clarionets, and drums, began to play the newest 'Ecossaise!'

"You may imagine how speedily all the neighbouring windows flew open. All heads peered out, and the street children came running together: everybody asking, 'What's the matter? What has happened?'

"'Oh, it is only our new Recorder welcoming his fiancée!'

"How I wished I could have sunk into the ground! He meant it well, and thought to do me a great honour—but it was a long time before I could get over it.

"However, that was all past and gone, and we were happy and satisfied with each other, when one day my uncle, the county judge, announced his intention of paying us a visit. Now, his visits were always most important events—ducks and chickens were killed, trout were caught, and in the best bedroom new curtains were put up, and the silk counterpane thrown over the bed. My father, who never at any other time troubled himself about household matters, actually went upstairs with me himself to see that all was right. I was just taking out from the wardrobe the real china service for the wash-hand-stand, which was never put out except on these great occasions, and then only with fear and trembling—for from our very childhood we had been accustomed to hear of its almost fabulous worth—when I suddenly exclaimed in surprise:

"'Why, father, here is a sealed letter for you!' And all at once there flashed upon me the recollection of the letter Bastel had brought on the day of the house-cleaning. I trembled to think of the storm this carelessness on the mother's part would be certain to arouse.

"My father hastily tore open the letter and began to read it; but as he read his countenance grew more grave and troubled.

"'This has come too late!' he said, slowly; and after a moment's hesitation he handed me the letter. 'There, read it, Caroline! it concerns you most!' And then, with long strides, he paced up and down the room. I began to read the letter, my heart beating fast with surprise and fear. But all at once it seemed to stand quite still: for what do you think were the contents of the letter? A formal offer for my hand from S. to my father: and enclosed lay a little note for me, so sweet and tender I can say it all even now by heart.

"Everything seemed to swim before my eyes, and conscious only of a longing to be alone, I hurried downstairs into the little dressing-room below. What did I do? I prayed—not without bitter tears,

it is true, but still I prayed to Him who stilled the tempest on the sea: and soon in my heart also 'there was a great calm.'

"When about an hour had passed my father once more called me to him. Now, I have always wondered since that he should ever have shown me that letter, or have said a word to me on the subject, seeing that I was already an affianced bride; but this proves how very deeply he must have felt it. I found him looking extremely pale and very much distressed.

"'Caroline,' he said, 'this is very grievous; God knows it pains me deeply that it should have occurred—that my promise——'

"'Do not let us speak any further of it, father,' I answered quietly. 'If God's will had been so, He could have ordered it otherwise. I did indeed at one time think how glad I should be to have such a husband; one whom I could have loved with my whole heart and soul; but now I wish to love Frederic, and God will enable me to do so.'

"'You are a brave girl, Caroline! God will order all things well for you!' and for the first time he held out his hand to me.

"His words were fulfilled: God did order all things well for us, and blessed us richly in heart and home, and eight strong children are now the comfort and joy of my old age.

"Whether my father ever wrote to S. I cannot tell, but for me, as an affianced bride, it would not have been fitting. Certainly I was much grieved that he should have thought himself thus scornfully rejected, and so have quitted us in anger. But I think he must have been a very proud man, or he never could have parted from us thus.

"Frederic was, as my father had said, an honest, upright man, and my best friend in all the world—one who loved and esteemed me all his life long. But you would be mistaken were you to suppose that just because at first he thought me so precious, and treated me like a princess, he was an unusually submissive husband. No—no—he was thoroughly the master and head of the house, and I was always obedient and submissive to him, as a right-minded wife should be. I would not say this of myself if he had not himself borne witness to it on his death-bed. But I never told him this story of S. and the letter until both he and I could feel *quite* certain that I no longer regretted the mishap. The unreserved confidence of married life is a very beautiful thing, and a true-hearted wife will have no secrets from her husband—only one must not plunge into this too hastily, or you may easily plant a thorn in your husband's heart such as it is afterwards very difficult to remove."

Now, if anyone, on hearing this story of the Ahufrau's early love, should picture her to himself henceforth like a harp with broken strings which can only give out one doleful sound, or like a weeping willow, bending continually over the grave of her departed dreams—

such an one would be very much mistaken. She did not *endure* life, but encountered it with fresh vigour, and fought on its battle-field cheerfully and well. And that she was not of a sentimental nature may be inferred from the fact that the first trouble of her married life was—the discovery that her youthful husband could not dance!

It was among the simple customs of those good old times that all important events of life, such as marriages, baptisms, etc., should be celebrated with correspondingly important festivities. Accordingly, the Ahufrau's marriage was solemnised with all due ceremony. All her friends, kindred, and acquaintance—even to the entire staff of her father's clerks—were invited to the wedding breakfast; all the servants, laundry-maids, and day-labourers at the house, including even former servants, with their parents, brothers, and sisters, were assembled to enjoy the warmth of the luxurious kitchen-fire and the bountiful repast it had helped to prepare.

"But in the evening," as the Ahufrau was wont to relate, "by ill-luck came the wedding-ball. For some time back there had been no dancing parties given at which I and my intended husband had been present together. Well, as soon as the music began, I stood up with my newly-married husband to lead the first minuet. But just when we ought to have begun, there was he only tripping about, like this, with his feet! 'Well, why don't you begin?' I said. 'I am very sorry,' he answered, laughing, 'but I have never yet succeeded in learning how to dance!' But it was no laughing matter to me. I felt quite ashamed that all my guests should see that I had a husband who could not dance, and I thought it was very unfair of him not to have told me so before."

Nevertheless, our worthy Ahufrau never found much time for dancing, however fond of it she may have been as a bride of sixteen years. Almost before she had reached her twentieth year three little children were playing round her knees; so her husband had at any rate no cause to envy her the delight in dancing which he could not share.

"I should not recommend such early marriages," she would say, "although it answered well enough with us. I was still a mere child, and had to buy my experience very dearly. But I was strong and healthy—and, thank God, I am so still. When the warden's wife came to see me soon after the birth of my first child, and crept quietly into my bedroom, to her astonishment she found the bed empty, and no young mother to be seen. 'But where can she be?' she inquired of the nurse in surprise and alarm. 'Oh, she is only out in the court-yard at the back, driving in the sledge for a little while.' For it was in the winter, and I had for a long time been hankering after the splendid sledge-road in the courtyard. But, as you may suppose, I was severely taken to task for it by my more matronly friends—and still more severely when, on another occasion, I kept all my friends waiting at home while I and some of my former schoolfellows were

enjoying a walk in the market-place—and meanwhile the unfortunate servant at home had just to make the best she could of it."

But the Ahufrau's experiences, though costly, were not in vain, for she became as excellent a housewife as was to be found in all Suabia: one who not only attended well to household and kitchen, but who also understood the management of fields and gardens, stables and meadows—yes, and even of cows and calves. The children who followed each other in quick succession were not looked upon as burdens and plagues, but welcomed as gifts from God. Nevertheless, there was no undue fuss made about them. Each bed was occupied by two children, which arrangement might, in any disturbance of brotherly concord, have proved fatal. Gottlieb and Christian, for instance, who in after years were the most amicable of brothers, in their early childhood were something of a Don Manuel and Don Caspar, and used literally to seize each other by the hair to such an extent that their mother at last determined to have their heads shaved. They used often to relate how strange it had felt to pass their hands slowly over their smooth bald heads.

Calamities of all sorts—chicken-pox, whooping-cough, scarlet-fever —were of course not wanting; but through all these troublesome waters the Ahufrau bravely steered her course. One day she was in the cowshed giving the dairymaid a practical lesson in the art of milking, when suddenly the whole troop of children came rushing in together, screaming out, "Christian has been eating the rats' poison —Christian has swallowed some of the rats' poison!" With great presence of mind the mother seized hold of the little culprit, and poured as much of the fresh warm milk down his throat as he could possibly be made to swallow, and in the violent sickness which followed upon the dose the poison and its dangers were got rid of, even before the hastily-summoned doctor had time to make his appearance.

The Ahuherr's house was next door to an inn, and one day, when the Ahufrau was sitting alone with her children in the parlour, in walked, without the slightest ceremony, a somewhat corpulent old gentleman. "Can I have a pint of good ale?" he inquired. "Certainly," replied the Ahufrau, at once perceiving his mistake, and she brought from the cellar some better ale than the landlord of "The Swan" was ever wont to set before his guests. "I must have a roll with it," continued the stout old gentleman. "We have some nice fresh rolls just baked," answered the obliging housewife. "And a light for my pipe also." "Sophia, bring some matches here," ordered the Ahufrau. "So!—and now leave me to myself," was the next command, for the children were standing with open mouths, staring at their strangely-mannered guest. "Certainly, I will take my children away. Come, children." And with imperturbable good humour the Ahufrau left the parlour with her children.

The stout old gentleman placed the pint of ale by his side, opened the window towards the street, and began, very much at his

ease, to smoke his pipe. But just then his coachman, who meanwhile had been unharnessing his horses, happened to catch sight of him. "Why, master, where have you got to?" he exclaimed, in surprise. "Where? Why, in the inn, of course," retorted the stout old gentleman, sharply. "No, no, sir, not at all; that is the recorder's house. The inn is one door lower down."

In a tremendous hurry the stout old gentleman shut down the window, put his pipe in his pocket, and stepped out of the door as quietly as he had come in noisily, looking round him first in the vain hope of discovering some servant on whom he might bestow some sort of fee. But at Christmas-time, by way of a return, there came a box of excellent preserved fruits "for the dear children," and it is said that the stout old gentleman behaved himself more courteously thenceforward, even when he was only at an inn.

Thus, no matter what circumstances were, the Ahufrau always proved equal to the occasion, and retained throughout the same buoyant disposition. No one who met the slender, delicate-looking woman would have imagined how firm a rule she exercised in her own home as housewife and mother, nor what an active example she set her daughters in indoor or outdoor work of all kinds, in which even servant-maids of some experience would gladly seek her advice and assistance.

And thus the abundant blessing which rested upon her home, and which seemed only to increase with each new birth, never fled from her like an affrighted dove, but seemed continually to gather strength. Just as an industrious vine-dresser improves the generous wine, which, while it is a wondrous gift to him from Heaven, is yet at the same time the reward of the honest labour of his hands.

But although the Ahufrau was so discreet and dutiful a wife, it did once happen, as she herself acknowledged, that on an occasion which threatened the peace and happiness of her young family she did not go quite the right way to work with her lord and master. "Lords and masters" must put up with a mistake of this sort now and then. Let her tell the tale.

"It chanced that two government commissioners came to our neighbourhood. I forget now what brought them, but they were gentlemen of rank who had some business to transact with my husband, and they seemed to take great delight in his society. Every evening they would make him join them at 'The Swan,' and, as the general company there was not select enough to suit them, they would shut themselves into a little room apart.

"Now, a more thoroughly upright and prudent man than my husband never existed; not even an emperor could have induced him to say or do anything wrong or untrue; but it was his weak point to be excessively pleased when any people of distinction invited him to have friendly intercourse with him. Perhaps this was the consequence of the extreme poverty and isolation in which he had grown up.

"He knew nothing of cards, and had a great horror of gambling; however, one evening he informed me that the young men had been teaching him a most ingenious game—he would never have believed it possible a game of cards could be so interesting.

"This struck me at once unpleasantly; however, I made no remark upon it at the time. But when every evening regularly the two gentlemen called for him, and when he, who had hitherto been punctual to the minute in coming home, began to linger on with them later and later still, growing ever more and more eager for their society, and caring less and less to concern himself with any of his former friends, I became uneasy, and at last mustered up courage to suggest to him, 'But, papa, don't you think you are growing almost *too* fond of this game and this distinguished company? Used you not yourself to say that the first card which a man takes into his hand is the first hair by which the devil seizes him?' But this only made him extremely angry. 'Do you suppose I am so weak that I cannot leave off when I choose? How could I be so rude to these gentlemen as to refuse to join in an amusement which gives them so much pleasure?'

"Alas! he himself found pleasure in it also. But I dared not venture on any further remark, even though I noticed that he began to take out money from the cash-box much oftener than before, and would seem desirous of hiding this from me, which had never been his way. Moreover, he would often come home in a very bad temper, and then on the following day would be all the more eager for the card-table. It was a terrible trouble to me, and many a sleepless night I passed in silent meditation and prayer, considering what I could best do to alter this state of things.

"Now, my husband had his study in the side wing of the old-fashioned building in which we dwelt, and the young men used always to come there for him.

"So one evening, about the time when they generally came, I stole across the courtyard—as stealthily as though I were about some very evil deed—locked the front door, and brought away the key. Then with fear and trembling I waited beside the little kitchen window until I heard them come. They knocked at the door, then tried the latch (for there was no bell), and finally walked away, apparently in surprise and vexation. Then I slipped across again and unlocked the door. About an hour later my husband came in, and looked at the clock. 'So late! Has no one been here?'

"'Not with me,' I answered, my heart beating so fast that it nearly suffocated me. He paced sulkily up and down the room.

"Just then little Christian came running in. 'Papa! won't you take us into the park again, just this once?'

"The proposal came exactly at the right time; he readily consented, and we all went out and enjoyed together the lovely fruits and flowers.

"On the following evening I repeated my experiment of locking the front door. (Luckily the study window did not face the front of the house.) The young men came and went away again as before, and on their way home they met our parlour-maid. 'Is the Recorder gone out of town?' they inquired. 'No, sir; he is at home.' 'But the front door is locked!' 'Then the master must have locked it himself!' she answered, for of course she knew nothing of my proceedings. 'Shall I inquire of my mistress?' 'Oh, no!' replied the commissioners, and shaking their heads they walked on.

"I again opened the door, and about a quarter of an hour afterwards my husband came in as before, very much out of sorts, but this time making no inquiries. Just at this moment our friend the Hofrath called; he had not been to see us for a long time, and to me it seemed as though he were sent direct from Heaven."

"'I thought I would just look in and see how you all were, and whether you and I could have another game of draughts together?'

"'To be sure!' exclaimed my husband, brightening up at once. 'Augustus! bring the draught-board here, and let the Hofrath have another trial. I will astonish him, whatever he may say!'

"So the two sat down together once more, and I at the table with my knitting, ready to cry with joy.

"'I met the merchant Mohrle just now,' observed the Hofrath. 'He was beaming all over with delight, and as usual talking more French than German. The government commissioners had invited him to a game of cards!'

"'The old fool!' exclaimed my husband, angrily. 'Just because he once stayed for six months in Strasburg, he considers himself a Frenchman, and thinks it is his duty to seek out the aristocracy.'

"And so the matter ended. The commissioners never came again, and my husband was much too proud to run after them. He spent his evenings at home, as in former days, and was happier than ever. And so that danger passed happily away.

"You ask me if I was right in acting as I did? Not altogether, I suspect. My intense uneasiness and the violent beatings of my heart proved to me that the course on which I had entered was not exactly a straightforward one, although I had intended well. But God over-ruled it for good, because in my ignorance I knew not how to act more wisely. I always meant to acknowledge this to my husband, but one day, the conversation happening to turn on card-playing and its dangers, I heard him frankly say, 'Ah, yes! the demon of gambling had at one time almost laid hold of me also, but I saw the danger just in time and broke away from it.' Then I had not the heart to tell him *how* this had come to pass! And when, later still—in his last hours—he humbly thanked God for this very deliverance, and ascribed all the praise of it to Him, I felt that there was no need for any further confession, and that soon he would

understand my whole heart and its intentions better even than I could myself."

In the midst of all this budding, sprouting, and maturing of the healthy twigs and branches of a powerful stem, there came the chill, cold blast of Death, and the father of the family, the prop and glory of the house, fell beneath its icy breath.

The Ahufrau had long ago, even in her youth, cause to dread this enemy. Her husband was a tall, thin man, and very soon after her marriage, people had pronounced him consumptive.

"That was a terrible weight upon me," she would often say in later years: and then she would relate a singular dream, which had seemed to her of great significance, for even in her lively, active mind there was a secret leaning towards a belief in dreams and tokens.

"It was at the time when I was so anxious about my husband's supposed tendency to consumption, and feared lest an early death should take him from me and my little ones. I dreamed one night that I was alone in a great solitary churchyard, and suddenly an awful figure appeared to me, whom I recognised at once as Death. In bitter anguish I cried out to him, 'Oh, Death! do not bereave me of my husband!' 'Entreat me three times,' Death replied, 'and I will spare him to you.' Once, twice, I entreated, but just as I was about to entreat him for the third time, little Conrad screamed, and I awoke."

For the time her husband was spared to her; but when he died, although he was sixty years of age, the Ahufrau could not restrain the thought, "Perhaps, if I had been able to entreat the third time, I might have kept him longer!"

Her husband's death was a turning-point in the life of the Ahufrau, and though her buoyant spirit after a time recovered its elasticity, and rose again to the joys and duties of a mother's life, it was henceforward in a still quiet twilight that her prolonged and far-extending life glided on its quiet way.

She lived to see her attractive and well-educated daughters leave her side with the husbands of their choice, to establish homes and households of their own, and she decorated her own widowed home to welcome her sons' blooming brides.

In every direction, from the valley of the Neckar to the bleaker clime of Albany, in the mansion and in out-of-the-way rectory-houses, she everywhere found a home—a home to which she might address her little laconic epistles of greeting and advice, and in which she could share with her loved ones their anxieties, joys, and sorrows.

For herself she preferred to remain alone—alone with her active and intelligent mind, and with the memories and associations of her youth. The old home passed into other hands, strangers went in and out of its hospitable doors, and the Ahufrau retired to a less fashionable part of the town; where, however, she soon established,

by means of the old family portraits, the handsome chiming clock, and sundry pieces of old-fashioned furniture, a cosy, cheerful-looking home, attractive to old and young. Her sole companion was a faithful old woman, who, with all the virtues of a confidential servant, combined also all her failings, and did her best to govern her mistress. Of the sons and daughters, who had long since made their own positions in the world, she was accustomed to speak with the utmost familiarity; and the family letters were all common property between her mistress and herself. She had a frugal mind, this faithful old Susannah, but it was more in her mistress's interests than her own. She would sometimes almost scold the Ahufrau: and on one occasion, on being desired to give a sausage, which had remained over from the breakfast-table, to a messenger, she distinctly refused to be guilty of such extravagance.

But yet the Ahufrau's life was by no means monotonous. Her easy circumstances enabled her to be of help and comfort to very many. Having grown up from her childhood among the inhabitants of the little town which had been her one and only home, she was now looked up to from far and wide as the trusted and faithful counsellor of rich and poor. One day the old maid Cicely would come in from the country, to talk, it may be, over some domestic concern; another day there would come a well-to-do labourer from the neighbouring village. "If you please, ma'am, I thought I would just like to ask your advice—there's my big boy wants to get married!" "Well, Geiger, is there any great harm in that? Your big boy is about thirty, I believe?" "Yes, but then,—the girl has no money." "But has she a good character?" "Oh, yes; an excellent character, and she is industrious, but still we can't think of it." "Well, but such a good character is a vast deal better than money," said the Ahufrau, bringing forward all the most convincing arguments she could think of.

"Yes, that's all very true, ma'am—but there's another drawback even then."

"What's that?"

"Why, the girl won't have him; and she's going to marry somebody else."

"Oh, you stupid old man! Then why have you kept me here talking about it all this time?"

But the worthy Ahufrau's advice was not always wasted in this fashion, and even when there were no acquaintances requiring it, there were always opportunities enough when it was needed in her own family circle. From hill and vale there would come letters, telling, here, of the birth of a great-grandchild, there, of the confirmation of a grandson, or perhaps of the approaching marriage of a granddaughter—and so the grandmother's bountiful hand found more than enough to do. Towards Christmas her rooms were almost like a booking-office until the numerous little hampers and

boxes were despatched, in the contents of which no one was forgotten.

In return for these there would come letters of thanks, New Year and birthday greetings, and little offerings from the grandchildren, most of which were laid by carefully in a drawer as pleasant tokens of affection, for which, however, she had but little use.

And then, too, as still more precious pledges of her life, her own children would come to stay with her, bringing all their anxieties and joys. And yet these visits were sometimes almost as great an anxiety as a pleasure to the old lady, who still thought much of keeping up her reputation, and was especially desirous that her housekeeping should appear to best advantage before her daughters-in-law—for which special purpose, on these occasions she always kept a private cookery-book upon her bedroom table.

The Ahufrau's life had certainly been a most happy one, but although it had so many charms for her, and she had so thoroughly enjoyed it, yet in her there was none of that sickly clinging to life which so often accompanies old age. She had never weakly turned aside from drinking the bitter drops in her cup of life, and so for her there was no bitterness remaining in its dregs. With the same quiet trustfulness with which she had encountered life, she now met tranquilly the approach of death. For even in the midst of all the wear and tear of youth, her heart and treasure had long been fixed in that land whither death would bring her.

Tended faithfully by loving hands, blessed and blessing to the last, the Ahufrau closed her life in peace, and was spared the trial of a lengthened illness. The lips, which in life had been so skilled in sprightly repartee, in those last moments spoke only words of loving greeting and heartfelt benedictions to her dear ones, proving how often it is not only the still waters which run deep. "By grace ye are saved," were the words which she herself chose to be the text of her funeral sermon.

Such was the Ahufrau in life and death. I cannot, of course, expect that this unpretending portrait of her should possess for others in general all the charm which her own immediate relations may find in it; but if it should serve here and there to call into existence even one heart so loved and loving as herself, it will have amply fulfilled its purpose.

THROUGH HOLLAND.

ON the road to Friesland, halting at Groningen by the way. The quaint, old-world Sassenpoort, with its numerous turrets, loomed out as we left Zwolle : the old tower of the Roman Catholic church upreared its ungraceful head. Would the country, about to be passed through, prove as monotonous as that which had gone before ?

To begin with, the fields on either side were very much under water. The windmills evidently had lately been out for a holiday. The only object amidst this waste to arrest attention was a graceful heron, with long legs and brilliant plumage, flapping its wings and looking at us as if it wondered where we too had found our flying powers. The journey must last some hours ; but, after all, it was not unpleasant to be sitting in a well-padded carriage, though the scenery on either side might be monotonous. It was rest at any rate : and that is especially grateful when the clockwork that regulates the human machinery has run itself down in wandering through streets, looking up old churches, noting the points of unknown pictures, and searching in vain after signs and signatures that do not exist.

Presently we came upon the moors, purple with heather. The turf had been cut away many feet deep for peat to supply the fires of the peasantry; and indeed of the towns also; where it would send forth that delicious, homely odour which never fails as a reminder of by-gone days spent now and again in remote French villages.

Now a halt at Dalfsen : the station-house on the one hand, a farm-house with straggling outbuildings on the other. The farm was gracefully covered with vines; and, surrounding the entrance, row upon row, were the blue and brass milk cans. Beside us a brook, in which many ducks comforted themselves. But at this moment the engine sent forth dense volumes of smoke upon them, which evidently ruffled their serenity. With an indignant quack they left the water, and one behind another waddled up to the farm door to lay their complaint before a beloved and sympathetic mistress. Soon after this we reached Meppel. Here our passengers changed for Groningen, and for five and twenty minutes had the pleasure of cooling their heels in an already too chilly atmosphere.

These things have to be borne in patience. The waiting-room was tolerably full of men and women, all very much of one class ; the men smoking and drinking beer, and eating their inevitable slices of bread and cheese. A loud bell rang, and away they went ; not, however, abandoning their delicacies, but carrying them off in triumph. A tall lady, in a gold helmet surmounted by a hat and black feathers

that nodded like the plumes of a hearse and looked simply ridiculous, rushed out with both hands and mouth full, and was followed by the greater portion of the room. A big ungainly woman, who, in running, somehow reminded you of a frolicsome cow. Why are there such women? Why were they not all made to tread softly and go gently, and be everything that is feminine? How is it that some with every movement remind you of a whirlwind? But the train these people rushed off to was not my train. For the Groningen passengers there was a further twenty minutes' exercise of self-control. When it came to an end and we were once more in motion, the shades of night had begun to fall, and those who had not cats' eyes had to draw upon their mental resources for amusement. At last there came a halt, the welcome cry of "Groningen!" from various porters, and our journey was over.

Darkness had long shut out the world when the station was left for the omnibus. The drive through the streets to the hotel seemed interminable. Here, so far north, I had expected to find things and people as fresh and primitive and unchanged as they were a century or two ago. I reckoned without my host. Groningen is one of the oldest towns in Holland, but, as far as could now be seen, streets and houses were modern, straight, and regular, and proportionately uninteresting. At length the omnibus turned into the square or market-place, and drew up at the hotel.

In the matter of hotels Groningen seems to be behind the age. This was the best in the town, yet one of the least comfortable in civilised Holland. The room was small and ill-ventilated. The bed must have once belonged to a monastery where bodily chastisement was a condition of the order. A small wooden box, surrounded by thick curtains that seemed of no use but to prevent all air from reaching the sleeper. In vain I asked for a better room. They had a few larger, certainly, but they were all occupied. This was no doubt true, for the noise that went on into the small hours of the night: doors banging; voices sounding; boots thrown out; steps running up and downstairs that certainly came not from the velvet paws of a cat: all proved the tale true. I made the best of it, determined that one night should limit my stay in Groningen.

The next morning I came down early. In the long breakfast-room small equipages of white china for tea and coffee, such as we had been favoured with at Hoorn, were ranged down the table. After breakfast I went into the town. The market-place, to begin with, is one of the finest and largest in Holland. A very few of the houses were old and curious; but the greater portion were distinguished for nothing but a certain brightness of aspect. This cheerful tone signalised the whole town, and was its chief characteristic. The ancient monuments and houses and picturesque costumes, the old-world manners and customs I had expected to find, were conspicuous by their absence. The shops were large and flourishing, with great plate-glass windows

worthy of Paris; the latest Parisian fashions perambulated the streets. Even the shop-girls wore hats and feathers, and towers of hair, and trailing skirts. Everyone seemed flourishing and rich. The air of wealth and prosperity that in a quiet way enveloped Groningen could not be mistaken. It is a successful town: in this respect one of the chief towns of Holland. Few visitors trouble it; but men of business come and go in a constant stream. In vain I wandered about in search of the antique. I found it not.

It was market day, and stalls were scattered over the market-place in full operation: from the picturesque vegetables, to the necessary, but by no means sweet-scented, fish stalls. One man came out of a side street with a net and bargained with a fat vrouw for a large basin of eels. The affair was at length concluded, and the eels were turned into the net; upon which the cunning fish as fast as possible slipped through the holes, scattering themselves and the people far and wide. The women screamed and affected very pretty airs of terror, and picked up their petticoats, no doubt thinking it a fine opportunity for displaying the neatest ankles in the world. The woman abused the man for bringing anything so senseless as a net for carrying away eels; and the man, like a true son of Adam, retaliated by blaming the vrouw for the smallness of her fish.

Immediately beyond the right-hand corner of the market-place, the old tower of St. Martin reared its venerable head; the most interesting monument Groningen possesses. The church is a Gothic structure, but less worthy of attention than the tower. It is built somewhat after the style of the tower of Utrecht, but though less ancient, looked more so, and it is said to be 430 feet high. Thus, go where you will in these old towns, you are certain to find at least one object to redeem your visit from absolute failure and disappointment.

Groningen possesses a rather celebrated university, and many benevolent institutions, most famous among them the asylum for the deaf and dumb. But the town is for the most part given up to commerce, and herein lies its strength and wealth. You will not find the noise and confusion of such a place as Amsterdam. With all its business—very much of which lies in various kinds of grain—there is a quietness about it that is pleasant: a certain repose (the hotels at night excepted) that would almost lend a charm, if that were possible, to the prosaic interests of sale and barter.

A very few hours showed me all I cared to see of Groningen, and found me on my way to Leeuwarden, the capital of Friesland. This was the last point northwards I intended to touch in my present visit to Holland. Beyond this, indeed, the country has little interest.

The sun shone hotly as we steamed out of Groningen that Friday morning. The sky was almost cloudless. It was somewhat of a relief to get away from this modern-looking town, with its straight streets and houses that all resembled each other, into the open country. Open enough, certainly; and flat; with little beyond the

sheep and the cows, the windmills and fields of grain, to claim attention. But it was something to watch the peasants reaping and stacking; strong-looking, sunburnt, happy men and women. A change to have the sun shining. Yesterday we had travelled in great coats: to-day airy garments and windows open to the grateful breezes. The very sheep looked pure and white, while yesterday they were a dingy brown. The old Spanish proverb ought to be especially applicable to Holland: "Feed a sheep with grass and he repays you in wool." Now we passed over a canal upon which a

A Batch of Windmills.

barge with its brown sails filling to the wind was a pleasant object to break in upon the monotony of the landscape. At Grypskerk we waited many minutes, apparently for no cause but that the train, slow enough in all conscience, was yet before its time. So the guards and officials assembled together in the waiting-room, and over sundry glasses of beer chatted about the change in the weather and the beauty of the cattle we were carrying, and the wonderful patience travellers must exercise in Holland. The surrounding prospect was pretty, almost diversified. Rich green fields and dykes, and happy cattle chewing the cud of reflection, or appearing to do so; small picturesque cottages surrounded by trees, and shrubs, and creepers, each rejoicing in a small garden and a bit of cultivated land. Trees bounded the

horizon, which to-day had taken quite a purple and romantic tone, that really seemed out of place in practical Holland. As seen this morning there was nothing dreary, or dismal, or monotonous in all this wide tract of land, this sameness of prospect. The sky, with its white fleecy clouds, was in itself a picture. Not one of the least pleasant features in the landscape was the reflection of the bright blue sky and white clouds in the surrounding dykes: lighting up the landscape as mirrors do a room. The sun, too, sparkled upon the water like so many jewels, bright and dazzling. Here a white patch upon the emerald grass announced a brood of ducks: a picture of calm repose after a mid-day meal. Would we could often feel as much. To-day, every separate object, the whole collectively, was thoroughly enjoyable. More than ever it was easy to perceive that Holland, above all countries, must be done in fine weather.

Buitenpost: the village close to the station. It was marvellous how the sunshine brought out all the tones, all the peculiarities of Dutch scenery. Every leaf was glinting in the bright light. The Dutch tiles caught the reflection and looked lively. There was an air of cheerfulness upon everything: a broad smile, not loud laughter. Just as it is for the most part with the Dutch themselves. They do not go into enthusiasms and ecstacies and gushing exhibitions. They are somewhat grave; even stern-looking; but when spoken to they for the most part reply with a smile. The only enthusiastic exhibition I witnessed was on the road to Groningen, when the shades of night were falling. A young man was met at one of the stations by a group of five or six young men on the platform. As the train came up and they caught sight of the traveller, canes were swung in the air, hands and hats were waved in token of recognition. The train stopped; he opened his window, and before getting down shook hands violently all round. Then, jumping out, he repeated the greeting with renewed energy, and kissed two boys that were of the party. One took his coat, another his bag, all crowded about him, and trod upon each other's heels in their endeavours to get close to the place of honour. It was a refreshing exhibition. In my solitude I almost envied the possessor of so many friends.

Hardegaryp. The guard came up for tickets: a welcome sign of the near approach to Leeuwarden. The air swarmed with gnats and small flies. The grass was rich and yellow with buttercups. The dykes were broad as rivers, their surface sparkling in the sunlight. The horizon was bounded by windmills and numerous church spires. A breeze was blowing, so fresh and grateful, we might have been on the very borders of the sea. A few moments more and the train stopped.

Leeuwarden was altogether a different experience from Groningen. Here once more I found myself amidst streets more thoroughly intersected by canals than many other places I had seen in Holland. They seemed really the principal part of the town, and

sometimes left no space between the long rows of houses but a small amount of pavement for foot passengers. Everything looked more primitive and old-world-like than in the town I had lately quitted. The people and the place wore a distinctive aspect, worthy of a race dating back to the very earliest days of Dutch history. The women of Friesland are celebrated for their good looks, and justly so. There were more pretty girls in its streets and windows than I could easily count. The maidens went about in their gold and silver helmets, peculiar ornaments, and picturesque dresses. But, as said the landlord of the hotel, they rebel more and more against these head-dresses, which conceal their flowing locks and so much of their beauty; and every year diminishes the number of quaint costumes. Whether with the change of habits and manners they will lose any of their charms, remains to be proved.

Here, also, as fate would have it, it was market day, and the day being still quite young, I came upon the midst of the bustle. It was a lively and unusual scene. The market was held on the banks of the canal: row after row of vegetable and other stalls. On the water were various barges which had brought up their wares for sale: toys and cheap cutlery, and small household goods and chattels. The costumes of the Friesland women, varied and picturesque, added much to the gaiety of the assemblage. Loud tones and noisy laughter predominated. Everyone looked busy and happy, as if for them life was made up of golden hours. Certainly they were just now golden as the sun could make them: and the water reflected its hot rays in myriads of sparkling jewels, that found their rivals in the brilliant glances of the blue-eyed women.

As in Groningen, so in Leeuwarden, the chief thing to strike you is the cheerful aspect of the town, not the quaintness of form and outline, or the antiquity of each separate structure. That important feature quite disappears in this part of Holland, to the surprise and disappointment of the traveller. Leeuwarden has a few interesting buildings, such as the prisons and the House of Correction; and that is all. The latter is a gem in its way; one of the quaintest houses in Holland, with its mixture of red and yellow brick and stone work, its statues of the Virtues, and its gabled roofs and windows. Before this building a formidable sentinel kept guard, and eyed suspiciously any endeavour to penetrate into the mysteries of the interior. The prisons are perhaps the finest in Holland. For beauty and order they are scarcely to be surpassed in Europe. The town is irregularly built; for that reason the more picturesque. Beyond the houses, by the side of a broad canal, the people have made themselves a promenade or semi-park, much patronised during the summer months. The churches of Leeuwarden are not worthy of any special notice.

After dinner that evening I chanced to pass a building wherein a considerable noise was going on; and, entering, found it to be a Jewish synagogue. The service was peculiar as it was novel. The

contortions and genuflexions; the swayings of the body towards all points of the compass; the wailing noises, which gradually rose from a half-whisper to the most frantic strains; the extraordinary rapidity of utterance; the manner in which a worshipper would occasionally turn round to a neighbour, and, at the loudest moment of these discordant wailings, ask some apparently business question: all this was calculated to excite unpleasant astonishment, and raise a feeling it was perhaps as well not to analyse. I recognised in a man who followed me into the building the owner of an old curiosity shop I had visited that afternoon, where I had stumbled upon some fine specimens of real old Worcester china. Had he come to blot out from his conscience a recollection of having imposed upon me, or endeavoured to do so? I soon had had enough of the synagogue, and departed, bewildered yet relieved.

The hotel, the Nieuwe Doelen, was extremely comfortable and highly to be recommended. I felt almost sorry to leave it early the next morning. But I had promised A. to meet him at Arnhem, where we were to pass the Sunday together. A very few hours, moreover, were sufficient to devote to Leeuwarden.

The morning was yet so early when we steamed away, that the surrounding country was enveloped in a thick white mist. The air was fresh but chilly, and wonderfully damp. By half-past eight the mist began slowly to disperse. A few yards of ground might be distinguished on either side, a heavy dew upon the grass looking like hoar frost. As the mist gradually cleared, the country looked almost like a snow landscape. Approaching Dedemsvaart, the mist rose in a body, as it seemed, and rolled off the face of the earth in a thick white cloud, far away into the sky. Then the sun burst forth, and quickly dispelled the dew upon the grass. The Dutch, one would think, ought to be rheumatic, yet are not. They look the healthiest people on the face of the globe. Petty ailments, dyspepsia and such-like, seem to be unknown to them; on the other hand, they are much subject to diseases of the throat and chest. I had one travelling companion this morning, to whom the mist and the dew seemed as marrow and fatness: whilst I was every now and then driven half frantic by neuralgic pains which shot through the head like lightning, and happily disappeared as quickly.

The last remnant of the mist cleared finally just in time to show up the old Sassenpoort and church-tower of Zwolle. I had seen a good deal since leaving it; travelled northwards in search of pre-Adamite men and manners—and found them not. Here I parted company with my neighbour. He was going to Utrecht—I to Arnhem. How polite they are, some of these Dutch, and with them it is in great part genuine. We had not spoken a word during the journey. Now he got up and bowed. I returned the civility. He got down his bag and umbrella and bowed again. I returned the compliment. He opened the door and bowed again. I could do no less.

Finally he got out, turned round, and would have bowed again, but his hands were full, and he therefore inclined his body to an angle of 45. Not to be outdone in politeness, I too inclined my body to an angle of 45, and, having both hands at liberty, doffed my hat with due ceremony. The Dutchman went off charmed, smiling all over his face. After all, it is better to have a little too much civility and attention than a little too little.

Travelling southwards, the country gradually assumed a richer and more cultivated aspect: a beauty somewhat more voluptuous. Now we passed the Yssel, wide, calm, and clean-looking, with low banks and clear waters that reflected the blue sky. To the right a shallow sheet of water, with trout plashing about its surface; raising in the

House of Correction, Leeuwarden.

breast longing but cruel feelings of a possible sport not to be obtained. Approaching Arnhem a new type of scenery disclosed itself. Undulations and even hills. Tall trees with foliage so rich we felt instinctively that our face was turned towards Germany. A lovely winding river, which might have been the Rhine, but was still the Yssel. Before all this change could be thoroughly realised, we came to an anchor. The day's journey was over.

In Arnhem you feel as if you had said farewell to Holland. All that is quaint and curious and characteristic of that country has disappeared. There is almost an air of fashion about the place: the air that distinguishes those towns that have their "season." Large, modern, white-faced houses showed themselves in profusion; hotels guiltless of the pride of antiquity. The old portion of the town remains much as it always has been, but without the quaintness to be found in so many of the Dutch cities.

The Rhine, which is here a tolerably broad stream, flows past, and goes winding on towards the sea. Calm and placid, it seems to have lulled itself into apathy after its long eventful journey through some of the loveliest scenery in the world. The country, up to a certain point, is still beautiful at Arnhem, but after this the Rhine bids farewell to all hills and undulations and everything of a romantic tendency.

The neighbourhood of Arnhem is justly considered the most beautiful in Holland: but it must be remembered how nearly it approaches the borders of a land that has few rivals in this respect.

Bridge of Boats, Arnhem.

The town is picturesquely situated. Wooded slopes and hills throw themselves about; charming houses nestle amidst a wealth of verdure. The trees are no longer stunted and barren, but full-grown and leafy. The Rhine adds much to the general effect, and throws a certain suspicion of romance over all: for romance and Rhine are synonymous terms. Here many of the wealthy Dutch have their country places, and escape in summer from the heat and smells of the town to the pure air and fair pastures of Guelderland. But about here, if it is still Holland, you feel that it has no business to be so.

The Rhine is here crossed by a picturesque bridge of boats. It was an idle occupation but interesting, to stand upon the bridge and watch the steamers going up and down the river. Before us lay the

town, much of it concealed by the intervening trees; thick foliage that glinted and rustled in the sunshine. Behind us a tract of flat country that after a walk of some fifteen miles would land us in Germany. Right and left the river flowed peacefully and pleasantly, creating a longing to jump on board one of the steamers and follow its upward course. To the left a curve soon lost it to view. The rich banks and slopes and wooded heights curved round with it. After the barrenness of Holland, all this wealth of verdure was startling, difficult to realise. No wonder the Dutch think so much of their beloved Guelderland. We should do the same in their place. As we watched, a steamer came round the curve. A portion of the bridge was unchained and went floating off on its boats, leaving a passage for the approaching vessel. It passed through, the boats were worked back, and the bridge was put right again. The mechanism was simple and easy; the bridge altogether a picturesque object.

Arnhem must always be interesting to an Englishman from the fact that Sir Philip Sidney here ended his days after the battle of Zutphen, in 1586, in which he was mortally wounded. The great church is a fine structure, imposing from its size, built of brick, with lofty arches, that, like so many of the Dutch churches, are vaulted with wood. Its chief interior attraction was a splendid monument of Egmont, Duke of Guelders, enclosed in a portion of the church railed off from the touch and tread of the profane. The sacristan keeps the key, and, like other sacristans, is of a persuasive disposition. Above, midway to the roof, fixed on a small platform against the inner north wall, was the kneeling figure of the duke, dressed in the armour that he wore in battle. The effect of this figure was peculiar and weird-like; almost unpleasant. So life-like, it almost seemed as if for some penance he had been doomed to kneel there through the ages: perhaps, like the Flying Dutchman, waiting for some maiden to be true to him to the death, and break the spell that held him in bondage. However this may be, there the figure remains, startling as it strikes upon you in sharp outlines against the windows and the stronger light behind; and after you have left the church, and long after you have quitted the country, it haunts your imagination and seems to throw a spell over your remembrance of the town which does not fade away. Opposite the church is the town hall, the Devil's house, as it is called, from the number of sculptured and grinning masques that adorn the front. It was under repair when we visited Arnhem, and probably many of the decorations would have disappeared when dust and scaffolding were cleared away. I had not heard of this house with the terrible name, and on the Sunday morning an Englishman seated opposite to me at the breakfast-table suddenly put the following question, with startling abruptness, in a deep double bass voice: "Sir, can you tell me which is the Devil's house?" At the instant I thought he asked for information upon the real subject, and with solemn query pointed

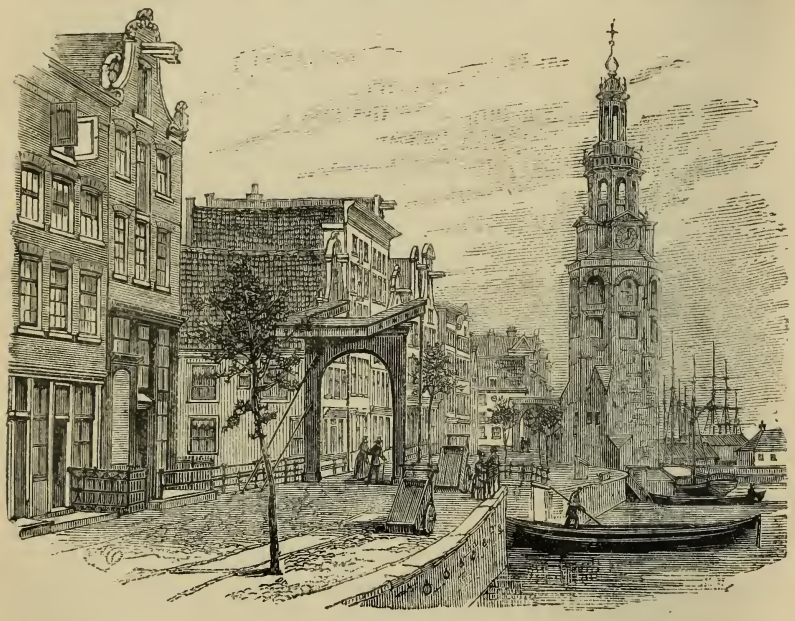
downwards. Finally we came to a better understanding, and by the help of a waiter obtained the necessary information. Not, however, without a mishap. Of two ladies with him, one was making tea, and the question so took away her presence of mind that she overflowed the teapot and ruined the cloth. After this it was tantalising to find the Devil's house under repair; and, beyond the great green gates, where cunningly carved and grinning ghouls kept guard, and struck terror into the hearts of the timid, the scaffolding and the clouds of dust more effectually barred the entrance than if an army of imps had suddenly been turned from stone into fell life.

There are many pleasant and picturesque drives about Arnhem; most favourite amongst them that to Roozendael. For some miles beyond the town, on either side the road, you pass a succession of showy country houses; some of them not built in the highest exercise of taste. At length a turning to the left, a short, shady road, and you reach Roozendael, with its walks and flowers; its ponds, where swans go sailing about; its greenhouses and well-arranged grounds. But most impressive of all, and in itself worth the drive, was a magnificent avenue of trees: an avenue of considerable width. The trees formed a complete giant aisle and arch, meeting far overhead, obscuring daylight; dark and sombre, gloomy and weird to intensity. One could only stand and gaze, lost in admiration. Then, as we walked slowly through it, the effect diminished and disappeared. At the end we looked back and wondered where it had come from. But returning, and looking once more down the long vista, there again was the solemn sombre aisle in all its wonderful beauty and magnificence. The world contains far longer, grander, and finer avenues than this; I know none more impressive. It was a gigantic cathedral aisle, erected by Nature, more beautiful and sublime than any raised by the hand of man.

On the Saturday evening, in our walks, we had come upon a house that seemed almost the only remarkable one in Arnhem. Portions of the exterior were sculptured, and its pointed mullioned windows seemed to indicate its having at one time been devoted to religious purposes. The door was opened and we ventured to look within, though, remembering the old woman at Zaandam, I trembled at my temerity. The master came forward, was all politeness and attention, and seemed flattered by our interest. The house, he said, had once been a convent. He pointed out one or two curious bits of carving, and said the house was full of such mementoes of a bygone day. It was growing dark, and appointing an hour for the following morning, he promised, if we would call, to show us over the whole place. But, alas, the next morning he had forgotten his appointment, and was not at home. His wife, a graceful and elegantly-dressed woman, came down to us, with all courtesy expressed her regret at her husband's absence, and begged us to return erewhile. Fate, however, or circumstances, willed it otherwise; and thus we lost the chance of

seeing what appeared one of the most curious and interesting houses in Holland. But the slight episode was not without its moral: an instance of the extreme courtesy shown to utter strangers: evidence of a good will, lurking in the heart, sufficiently rare to make it, when thus found, go far in winning over one's affections towards a strange people.

A. left Arnhem on the Sunday night. He had been admitted to a certain museum in Amsterdam, where he could only paint from six to nine in the morning, and he wished to make the most of his time. On the Tuesday I also left Arnhem. The country, as we steamed



AMSTERDAM.

away, was for a short time excessively interesting. Undulating slopes, rich clusters of trees, long avenues cool and shady, and large, modern-looking white houses dotted about. But it soon gave place to ordinary landscape—long stretches of moors and purple heather, distant windmills and church spires. Towards Utrecht the landscape again became more undulating. White clouds above the horizon towered like snow mountains in the delicious blue of the sky. Moors and plantations disappeared. Pastures opened out; herds of grazing cattle; men and women toiling in the fields; fruit-laden orchards; long avenues of trees; now and then a fortress surrounded by a moat; a small graveyard, with tiny stones to mark where the dead were resting; the outskirts of a town; an agonising shriek from the engine; an

old tower, from which all Holland may be seen at a glance; a slackening of speed; and we stopped at Utrecht.

A few minutes here, and onward again. At the appointed hour I entered once more into the quaint old city of Amsterdam. Our stay in Holland was drawing to a close.

CHARLES W. WOOD.

BITTER WORDS.

I WEEP no more because thy words
Have ended all 'twixt thee and me,
But they have scared my singing birds,
Whose nest is cold within the tree.

Nor do I weep because the way
Is lonely now, uncheered by love;
But oh, the sultry, silvery grey,
And not to hear the lark above!

I weep no more that loving eyes
Have looked with loveless scorn on me,
But for the aching light that lies
Where Love's soft shadow used to be.

I would not weep, that long have fed
On dainties, while my brethren pine,
Could I but eat their common bread
And slake my thirst with homelier wine.

I would not weep—my house of pride
Is rent asunder, roof and door—
But for the shapes that mock and glide,
Embalmed as holy heretofore.

I weep because no sun shall rise
When earth shall be as once it seemed,
And I, with soul-reviving sighs,
Shall, waking, say, "I only dreamed!"

And yet, and yet, a day may dawn
To music sweeter than a bird's,
And I, the veil of flesh withdrawn,
Shall hear no more those bitter words!

C. M. GEMMER (GERDA FAY).

BERTHA DANE.

YOU might have been puzzled to define the kind of room in which stood Bertha Dane—whether it might be meant for parlour or kitchen. A cottage piano filled one recess; a sewing-machine the other; the large windows were furnished with holland blind shades without; with hanging baskets, from which drooped ferns, within. But the grate was a large old-fashioned thing, with an oven and hobs, evidently meant for cooking; in fact, a small saucepan was simmering on one of the hobs at this moment, and the tea-kettle boiled on the other. It was the ordinary sitting and living room of the old-fashioned farmhouse: there was a better one on the other side the hall for high days and holidays.

At this farmhouse lived Mr. and Mrs. Robarts; generally addressed by Bertha as Uncle Stephen and Aunt Pen. But, in calling it a farmhouse, it must not be supposed that farming work was carried on in it. A few acres of land were attached to the house, and that was all. The Robarts family had been in the days gone by an improvident family, and the greater portion of the good broad lands were parted with before it came into the possession of the only son left—Stephen. He and his wife, middle-aged people now, lived here in peace and quiet on their very limited means; he cultivating the garden and the little land remaining to him; she practically attending to the household matters with untiring activity.

It wanted less than a fortnight of Christmas Day, and Aunt Pen had gone out on a shopping tour connected with the preparations for that hospitable season. Bertha, lifting now and again the lid of the little saucepan, stood by the fire crying. On the red cover of the centre table stood the tea-tray with its cups and saucers; a white cloth was spread over the opposite end of the table, a plate of bread-and-butter on it, and some knives and forks.

The entrance door was heard to open. Somebody stayed to take off hat and overcoat in the hall, and then came into the room: a small, short man, with a quiet thoughtful face and grey hair. He wore a suit of grey, and began to unbutton his leggings as he sat down by the fire.

"Where's your aunt, Bertha?"

"She went into the town to order currants and things, Uncle Stephen. And she said that, as it promised to be a fine evening, she might go on to see grandmamma. Uncle John would be sure to see her home at night."

"What's the matter, Bertha?" For Bertha had been unable to hide the sound of tears in her voice, and the moisture that glistened on her eyelashes.

"Oh, nothing," she answered evasively; and forthwith began to make the tea in a bustle. Uncle Stephen, getting off the last gaiter, put that and its fellow in the corner behind the mantel-piece; and then had leisure to miss something in the room.

"What's gone with the hearth-rug, Bertha?"

"Aunt Pen rolled it up before she went," glancing at the far part of the room. "She said she could not trust me not to upset things upon it when I had cooking to do."

"Cooking?"

Bertha lifted the lid of the saucepan. "These kidneys are being stewed for you, Uncle Stephen. We thought you would want something better than bread-and-butter, as you could not get home to dinner."

Bertha turned the stewed kidneys into a dish as she spoke, placed it on the white cloth by her uncle's place, and then sat down to pour out the tea. Mr. Robarts was hungry, and did justice to the good cheer provided for him; but he had leisure to look at his niece between whiles. Her studied calmness, in spite of the compressed lips and brimming eyes, showed the self-control she was exerting; and he admired her for it. The girl had a nice face: bright dark eyes, and good, well-carved features, with a fresh, pure complexion. She was rather short, and she wore a shabby stuff gown, all over darns. But in spite of the shabbiness and the darns, her looks, her voice, and her self-contained manners all bespoke the gentlewoman.

"Bertha," said he again, "what's the matter?"

No answer. Just a sigh swallowed down with a gulp.

"Bertha, what is it that's the matter? Answer me, my dear."

"It is the rehearsal to-night: and—and Aunt Pen won't let me go."

The answer came with a burst of grief: the pent-up tears rained down now.

"Why not? Because she is out herself?"

"Yes. And it is such nonsense besides, she says. Oh, Uncle Stephen! *This* night, of all nights, not to go!"

Aunt Pen was mistress and master, and Uncle Stephen knew it. Truth to say, he thought, and Bertha thought, that she had gone out on purpose that the girl should not go. He drew his easy chair to the fire and lighted his pipe. Bertha began to wash the tea-things on the table as they stood.

"Where's Sally?" asked he.

"News came that her little brother had met with a bad accident, and Aunt Pen let her go home to see him."

The tea-things put away, the hobs cleared of the kettles, the hearth-rug laid down, and the room altogether in order, Bertha sat to the table and got out some stocking-mending. But Mr. Robarts had finished his pipe then, and he went to the piano.

"Come along, Berthy."

If Stephen Robarts had one passion in life above all passions, it was the love of music. He played beautifully: as some of those self-taught natural geniuses do play. Bertha, although she was his wife's niece and not his, had the same passionate love for music, the same innate taste for it.

He touched the keys of the worthless old piano—he could not afford to buy a better—and struck into the prelude of an anthem. Bertha stood at his side and sang it. Her clear, sweet, rich tones filled the room. It was Uncle Stephen who had cultivated her voice; who had given her this correct style; who had materially aided in making her what she was—a most charming singer. His love of oratorio music had taught her to be as familiar with it as most girls are with ballad-singing. Anthem after anthem she sang as she stood there: now one, now another. Absorbed in this beloved employment, Bertha recovered peace of mind, almost forgetting her disappointment.

"Go and get your shawl on, Berthy," he suddenly said. "You shall not lose the meeting. I'll keep house."

Her whole face brightened up. What a nice face it was!—seen with this rush of sunlight upon it.

"Oh, Uncle Stephen, how good of you! But—there'll be the kitchen fire to see to! And—you won't forget to wind up this lamp? It will be down about eight o'clock."

"All right, child."

When she came down stairs in her old plaid shawl and shabby hat, Uncle Stephen was blind and deaf to present concerns: all the higher cravings of the man's heart were for the moment satisfied by this glorious music of Handel's. Bertha thought there was every chance of the lamp running down and the kitchen fire going out. And then—when Aunt Pen came home, and found things in what she called a "state"——

"Uncle Stephen, do you think you *can* remember the lamp and the fire?"

He nodded slightly to the question. The tears were rolling down his grey face as he contrived to sing the favourite air that always affected him, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." His voice had been good once, but it was weak now. Bertha stood listening at his elbow till it was over.

"And *then*, when we are up there, Berthy, face to face with Him, the Lord and Saviour, it won't matter what crosses we have suffered here, will it, dear?"

"No, no, Uncle Stephen. Trouble will all be over then."

Bertha left him plunging into the Hallelujah Chorus. Tears had risen to her own eyes; and she stopped for a moment as she shut the house door behind her.

Poor Uncle Stephen! Would she ever be able to give him the one luxury he coveted—a new piano? As to an organ, it was simply

beyond all idea: but Uncle Stephen had left off wishing for that in sheer hopelessness.

As she ran through the garden in the cold, and thence into the high road, Bertha Dane began wondering—she had so wondered many a time—how Stephen Robarts, the refined, dreamy man, had ever married so matter-of-fact, practical a woman as Penelope Bright. They were of a totally opposite nature. He loved music; music made her nervous; he thought a true genius for it to be the greatest of all God's gifts; she considered "those music people" to be next door to idiots for uselessness. While he, playing softly so as not to disturb her, lost himself in dream-land at the old piano, she rattled away at the sewing machine, or made pies and puddings in the kitchen. Mrs. Robarts had as much perception of the beauties of harmony as the machine needle had of the sheets it hemmed, or the rolling-pin of the paste it fashioned. But for the rubbishing music, Stephen might have been a more useful man than he was, and made more of his land, she used to say: and that was undoubtedly true.

Some few years ago, Bertha Dane, a timid girl of fourteen, had come from a distance to live with them. Poor though they were, they took to her as their own, and did not grudge the cost she would be. For the child, whose father had been a curate and her mother Penelope's sister, was suddenly left an orphan; both parents having died within a few weeks of each other. The child was a lady when she came to them: brought up to be one: but Aunt Pen at once began to train her in usefulness, and Bertha's days of study were over. Beyond the reading of a few books and the cultivation of her taste for music, which Stephen undertook, Bertha got no intellectual instruction; but she grew clever at domestic duties, and had learnt to sew as well as her aunt. She had no money; none; and felt grateful to them for the home they gave her.

About a twelvemonth before this evening we are writing of, some ladies and gentlemen in the adjoining town, Crossdale, had formed themselves into a society for practising music and singing, calling it the Philharmonic Society. This society thought a great deal of itself socially, boasting of one baronet amid its members and three ladies of title. A public artiste had been allowed to join it, principally for the benefit derived from her style, also two finished singers from the choir of a neighbouring cathedral: these three were paid for their services. In good truth, there was no very shining light at Crossdale, whether male or female; not one who could attempt difficult parts in public. And the society gave public performances sometimes, in behalf of divers charities. Through the interest of her uncle, Stephen Robarts, Bertha Dane had been allowed to join this society. He would have liked to join it himself, but feared he should be looked upon as "too old:" few of the members were over thirty or thirty-five years of age. That objection could not apply to Bertha, and he got her admitted quietly, saying nothing about it at home to

anybody. But when he confessed what he had done, and Bertha was lost in an ecstacy of rapture, Aunt Pen was more angry than she had ever been, and wanted to send and do away with Bertha's election; scratch her name off the roll of the society. As good make her into an actress at once, protested Aunt Pen: and that music must have turned Stephen clean mad.

However, for once Stephen carried his own will. With much coaxing and deprecation, he pointed out to his wife that the child's one sole recreation was music, that her voice and her talent were above the common, and that they had *no right* to deny her the opportunity of improvement. So Aunt Pen, who prided herself upon being just, and who really was so, gave in with a good deal of grumbling.

The one white day in the week for Bertha was Thursday. At eight o'clock the society met in the concert hall for their practising. Sometimes, however, they met only once a fortnight: always so in summer. Few of the members had taken any notice of Bertha: the quiet girl of retiring manners, who was always dressed poorly, was obviously not worthy of it. Ready money was sadly short at Uncle Stephen's; and Aunt Pen never laid out a farthing unnecessarily.

Away walked Bertha under the starlight, drawing her old plaid shawl closely round her throat. The town was not far off, the road anything but lonely, gas lamps lighting it all the way. Bertha felt as safe as in her own parlour at home. She generally went alone; but Uncle Stephen would fetch her back.

Bertha, conscious that she was late, entered the hall just as the members rose to sing the opening chorus. Somewhat abashed, she was about shrinking into a back seat when the leader's sharp eyes fell on her. A rapid nod brought her forward to her usual bench, the first in the row of the general chorus singers. When Bertha was first given this seat, it was her one idea of perfect bliss, for right in front of her sat that charming singer, Miss Carpenter, the one paid lady artiste. Bertha could touch her handsome garments, watch her mobile features, and catch every sound of the marvellous voice. Oh, what a wonderful creature, in Bertha's eyes, was Miss Carpenter! A woman who sang in fashionable places, with a salary of nobody knew what; who appeared at concerts in wondrous dresses, and trilled out pathetic little ballads, when encored after a heavy scena, that literally brought down the room; who took the applause like a queen accepting homage, seemed to think nothing of her triumph, and was sent carefully home in a carriage!

Bertha would give Uncle Stephen imitations of this wonderful woman's surpassing style, and he would kiss his little niece, praise her voice, and declare that, for his part, he knew Berthy could do as well if she only had a chance.

The remark would send Berthy into low spirits. She never would have such a chance. It was so dim, so imaginary. She had no

money to pay for good instruction; no influential friends to introduce her to the notice of prominent masters; no courage to put herself forward or try to attract observation.

The conductor of these meetings was a Mr. Mason, the organist of the principal church of Crossdale; he had a bald head, and Bertha thought him very stern: but he had talked to her a little lately: and once he had called her to his side and seemed to listen attentively to her while she sang in the chorus. He was in his place this evening, and Miss Carpenter was in hers: and Bertha was, as usual, in the seventh heaven of delight. A sacred concert was to be given in public the day after Christmas, and they were now practising for it. More than ever was Bertha this evening enchanted with Miss Carpenter's singing, as she took the solos; never had her voice sounded so clear, so pure, so rich and resonant. Bertha, all her attention given to Miss Carpenter, did not observe a gentleman in clerical attire, who seemed to look at herself as well as at the great lady.

Suddenly there occurred a delay. Several people had gathered round Mr. Mason, and Bertha presently discovered that they were talking of the desirability of introducing some duet, which had not previously been thought of. The strange clergyman, who appeared to be a friend of Mr. Mason's, as he stayed by him all the time, seemed to urge it strongly.

"I am willing," said Miss Carpenter. "But, is there anyone who could take it with me?"

Mr. Mason looked round at the different ladies—for the duet was for two trebles—and hesitated. "Could you take it, Mrs. Pembridge?" he asked.

"I dare not," replied the lady addressed. "I should break down from sheer nervousness. To sing before the public is so different from singing amongst ourselves."

"*You* could take it, I think, Miss Dane?"

Bertha started, hardly believing her ears, or that the organist could be addressing herself. But he was motioning to her to go forward, and she obeyed, a hot colour flushing her cheeks.

"Did you ever try it?" asked Mr. Mason, putting the sheet of music in her hand.

"Sometimes. With my Uncle Stephen."

Never another word spoke he. Beginning to play, Bertha found she had to sing at once with Miss Carpenter. Two, three times over did they try it. At first Bertha was timid; but as she lost her self-consciousness in the delight the music brought her, she sang her best, and became oblivious to all else: the old plaid shawl slipped off her shoulders, displaying her older dress; and she never once noticed that the eyes of the clergyman were again steadily fixed upon her.

"That will do for now," said Mr. Mason to her. "You can return to your seat for the last chorus."

The rehearsal over, the room soon cleared itself. Bertha went out last: she never put herself forward before those well-dressed people who let her see that they looked down upon her. At the entrance door below she glanced up the street and down the street, thinking she might see her uncle, for he always came for her. But no: he was not to be seen.

"Neither Aunt Pen nor Sally can have got home," she thought, "and so he could not come out."

"Are you going home alone, Miss Dane?" asked Mr. Mason, as he came forth with his clerical friend.

"Yes," she answered. In her eyes this man of music was a very great man, one to be respected almost as a lord. "My uncle has not come for me to-night. I shall soon be there."

She set off with a light, quick step. But had hardly left the street behind her and entered on the country, when the clergyman caught her up.

"I will walk with you, if you will allow me, Miss Dane," he said. "I find your road lies in the same direction as mine."

"Oh, thank you," she returned; "thank you very much. But indeed, I am not at all afraid; there's nothing to hurt me."

He seemed a very pleasant man, this clergyman, but quite old compared to Bertha: thirty-four, at least: a rather tall man, with a good, friendly face. They chatted away on many subjects, chiefly on music, and Miss Carpenter's wonderful voice.

"Ay, she'll not stay at Crossdale long," he observed. "A voice like that must make its mark."

"You are fond of music, are you not?" asked Bertha.

"Very fond of it indeed. But I neither play nor sing."

"Oh, what a pity!"

"Do you think so!" he returned, smiling at her naïve remark. "I can hear others: that is better than singing myself. It—oh, is this your home?"

For Bertha had stopped at the gate. He held his hand out to wish her good night.

"Tell your father that you have been taken care of," he said. "I ——"

"It is my uncle and aunt that I live with," interrupted Bertha. "Papa died a long while ago. He was a clergyman."

"A clergyman!" echoed the stranger, some surprise in his tone, as though he thought her poor attire was not much in accordance with what befitted a clergyman's daughter: at least, that was the construction Bertha put upon it. "Dane?—Dane? He was not the Reverend Richard Dane, was he, curate of Allingham?"

"Yes, he was," said Bertha.

The stranger's answer was to take both her hands in his. "We are old friends," he said with enthusiasm. "You don't remember me, I daresay, but I was once staying in your house, reading with your

father. You were a pretty little child of five or six, and I used to nurse you on my knee and call you little Queen Berthy."

"I—think—I do—remember," said Bertha, slowly. "But papa always had young men reading with him. Only one at a time; there was no room for more: as soon as one left, another came."

"And he is dead, you say? Poor Dane! I have not heard of him of late years, but thought he might have got a better curacy—or perhaps a living."

"He died nearly six years ago at Allingham, when I was fourteen. Mamma died just before him."

"Dear, dear! And you are living here! But I must not keep you any longer, Miss Dane. I hope you will allow me to call and see you, and to make acquaintance with your aunt and uncle. I shall never forget your father's kindness to me."

"Yes, please come," answered Bertha in her unsophisticated way. "I am so glad to meet some one who can talk to me about papa and mamma. Nobody in all Crossdale knew them, except Aunt Penelope. Have you far to go to-night?"

"About three parts of a mile—up to Little Crossdale. Good night."

From a romance to reality is not far; and having soared with Handel above all temporal and earthly vanities, and just parted with this delightful new friend, Bertha was recalled to earth by the high tones of her aunt's voice, evidently in hot dispute with Unce Stephen.

"It's all nonsense," she was saying as Bertha entered. "If the girl would give up her nonsensical music and attend to her sewing and her housework, it would be better for all of us. Gallivanting out at night instead of darning the stockings, and leaving you at home to look after things! Here I find the lamp in a black smoke, every spark of fire in the house gone out, and you buried in your 'Creation' and 'St. Paul,' and all the rest of the stuff! Where's the good of it?"

"You don't like music, Penelope, and can't understand the good in it. It takes one right out of the world."

"Where's the use of that?" demanded Aunt Pen. "You have to come back to the world again."

Stephen sighed. Sometimes he did wish he could get out of the world altogether: at any rate, out of the range of its sharp tongues. Bertha, taking the opportunity of a moment's lull, told eagerly of the great honour in store for her—that she was to sing in a duet with Miss Carpenter at the concert. It aroused Aunt Pen's wrath.

"What!" she cried. "Sing a duet in public, in the face and eyes of Crossdale! No, never. You are my own sister's child, and I'll never see you on the stage—disgracing the family!"

"On the stage! Oh, aunty!"

"It's as bad as the stage," cried Aunt Pen. "Where's the difference?"

"But—this—is—an—oratorio, aunt," said Bertha impressively, the tears starting in her eyes. "And you know that ladies of the best families in Crossdale are to sing in it."

"I'd not give a penny to hear all the oratorios in the world," retorted Aunt Pen, slightly diverging from the subject, as it is in the habit of talkative ladies to do. "And, pray, where would you get a dress from, to stand up and sing in? The clouds would not rain one down. No; you must just make up your mind to quit the society from to-night, and stay at home."

Bertha burst into tears. Uncle Stephen lighted his pipe meekly, and sat down to smoke it. Just then Sally was heard returning, and Aunt Pen stalked forth to find fault with her in the kitchen.

"Don't cry, child," said he. "She always says more than she means, you know, when things go wrong: and I did forget the fires and the lamp. It was *that* made her angry: she thought that it wouldn't have happened but for my letting you go out."

"But, Uncle Stephen, I'd not miss the oratorio for the world. We have been practising for it so long."

"Oh, she'll let you go when the time comes. And she and I will go too—at least, I will. You will have two tickets given you as a member."

As Bertha dried her eyes, she began telling of the strange clergyman who had walked home with her—and of his having lived with them at home when she was a little child.

"What is his name?" asked Uncle Stephen, putting down his pipe for a minute in surprise.

"I don't know; I did not hear it, and forgot to ask it," replied Bertha. "He is so very, very nice, Uncle Stephen; it is such a good, pleasant face: and he seems already quite like an old friend."

"A clergyman?" debated Uncle Stephen. "Said he had to go to Little Crossdale? Berthy, I'd not be surprised if he is the new rector."

"Oh, uncle! But that's such a rich living—nine hundred a year, they say. The rector of Little Crossdale would not be likely to notice me."

"I don't see what the living has to do with it," returned Uncle Stephen. "What was he like, this young man?"

"He has nice blue eyes, and the pleasantest voice and way with him you ever knew," lucidly replied Bertha.

"Is he tall or short, fat or thin, child?" asked Uncle Stephen, thinking her description a lame one. "A red face or a pale one?"

"He is rather tall and quite thin, uncle; and his face is pale."

"Then I think it is the new rector. His name's Brook."

"But why do you think it, uncle?"

"Yesterday morning, as I was standing at the fence in the meadow, talking to Clutterbuck on the other side of it, a clergyman passed down the road—a youngish man, a few years past thirty. 'That's

Mr. Brook, the new parson at Little Crossdale,' said Clutterbuck to me, and we watched him out of sight. He was like what you describe him to be, Bertha."

"He said he should like to call here, Uncle Stephen. I hope Aunt Pen won't be put out if he does."

"There's no answering for that," said Uncle Stephen.

For once the Fates were propitious. Aunt Pen was in one of her best and brightest humours when Mr. Brook called, and she received him graciously. He had lost no time, for it was only the afternoon following the rehearsal. Mrs. Robarts was really glad to meet one who had lived for two years with her sister, and she talked so much that nobody else could get in a word. She gave him a little of her ideas on the subject of oratorios, as connected with the stage and Astley's Circus, and especially as to Bertha's singing in them in public: and Mr. Brook gave his. It was a holy work, in his opinion, he said; and those who took part in it and those who listened were brought for the time nearer to God. Uncle Stephen's eyes glistened: and Aunt Pen began to think that, after all, she would let the child sing the duet—just for this once.

Mr. Brook was treated to some of Aunt Pen's cowslip wine, and to some seed-cake. He found both excellent. Aunt Pen told him she had made the wine herself and Bertha the cake. Bertha could make cakes with anybody, she added; pies too; jam, and pickles; beds also, when needed: all thanks to her own training of her; *she* was not going to bring her up to be good only for fal-lals. Mr. Brook's eyes had a laughing light in them as he listened, and Bertha's meek face was glowing with painful blushes. Aunt Pen bade Mr. Brook drop in when he liked at the tea hour, as she shook his hand at parting: and he said he would.

"Aunt Penelope is not in the least like what mamma was, is she?" cried Bertha in a low appealing tone, as she ran forward, bidden by her aunt, to open the front door for Mr. Brook.

"No, indeed," he answered heartily, the same laughing light shining in his eyes, as they looked steadily into Bertha's.

A wonderful thing took place. Three days later, as they were finishing breakfast on the Monday morning at Uncle Stephen's, the postman brought a letter for Miss Dane. It was a very rare thing indeed for him to bring a letter at all to the farm, but he had never yet brought one to Bertha. The girl looked at her uncle in indecision: *could* it be for her?

"Open it, child," said he. Aunt Pen was gone out with a plateful of scraps for the cocks and hens, or she would have opened it herself. It proved to be from Miss Carpenter: asking Miss Dane to call upon her that morning without any delay.

"Oh, Uncle Stephen! What do you think it can be for?"

"How should I know, child? To try the duet again, perhaps."

"Suppose—suppose Aunt Pen should not let me go?"

"But she must, I think. I am going into Crossdale presently, and will take you."

"Do you think, Uncle Stephen, I might venture to put on my best Sunday things?" questioned Bertha, in a fluttering whisper. "This frock is so shabby; look at it: and Miss Carpenter is always in silks and satins."

"Well, I don't know," replied Uncle Stephen, quite inclined to wink at the implied treachery. "If you could manage to slip out unseen, perhaps—but, if not, you'd be sure to be sent back to take it off."

Aunt Pen gave in to the visit, but not without a vast deal of scolding. This was a busy morning: Monday mornings always were busy; and there were a hundred and one things waiting for Bertha to do. Aunt Pen was down in the cellar, salting some bacon, when Bertha slipped out in the "Sunday things." A ruby merino "frock," as Bertha called it, a nondescript kind of old fur tippet, which had become too small for Aunt Pen, and a black hat with an upright dahlia in it: all very much the worse for wear.

Miss Carpenter was not in silks and satins this morning. She was lying on the sofa in her pretty sitting-room over the hair-dresser's shop, wrapped in a becoming grey dressing-gown with a geranium-coloured shawl upon it. Bertha looked the sorrow she felt when the famous singer spoke in a whisper, being unable to speak in anything else.

"Oh, thank you, Miss Dane! You see how I am: about to be laid up. No singing for me, the doctor says, for the next fortnight. I was in the greatest distress about the sacred concert until I thought of you."

"But what is the matter?" asked Bertha.

"My throat—don't you hear how bad it is; Mr. Glassup fears quinsy. I had it once, some years ago. I am going back to bed presently, and my old aunt is coming to nurse me."

"Yes," observed Bertha, feeling rather bewildered. "And—did you want me to do anything for you?"

"Why, to be sure I do," cried Miss Carpenter, speaking as briskly as her sore throat permitted. "You must take my place at the concert."

"Oh!" cried Bertha, when able to speak. "I?"

"Yes; you."

"But how could I, Miss Carpenter?"

"Why, very easily, child. I can tell you I was astonished at the quality of your voice, ay, and at your singing, when you tried that duet with me on Thursday evening. You will sing easily all I was about to sing, and sing it well."

"But—I should never have the courage," pleaded Bertha.

"Nonsense. One with your voice and cultivation need not lack that. It's just this, Miss Dane: failing you, the concert cannot take place, for there's nobody else that could even attempt the parts. I am unfortunately debarred singing, and it rests with me, you see, to provide a substitute. Unless I do, all the blame will lie on me. Do try; try your best, for my sake."

"But—there's the anthem?" hesitated Bertha.

"'I know that my Redeemer liveth,' yes," carelessly remarked Miss Carpenter. "Well, you can sing that: it will just suit your voice and style. Did you ever sing it?"

How many times she had sung it, and how she loved it, Bertha did not care to confess. She felt perfectly bewildered at the prospect opening to her, shrinking from it in modest timidity. Not that she feared her own power and capability, but—she had never thought to be brought into such publicity.

"Come and run it over for me," said Miss Carpenter, leaving the sofa and crossing the room. "I can tell then whether you may attempt it. Now, don't get timid; just sing as if no one were listening; and let me tell you that is what you must always do in solos; throw your whole soul into the music, forgetting the choir and the audience. The organist will follow you in this, and you'll be sure to make an impression."

Poor Bertha! This sounded like fine satire. However, Miss Carpenter had opened her piano, and was playing the accompaniment with a strong, clear touch. Bertha sang, at first slightly nervous, afterwards thoroughly alive to the necessity of doing her best. Uncle Stephen must not be disgraced by his one pupil.

"Bravo!" cried Miss Carpenter. "It will do. What a pure style. Just what Mr. Mason admires. You have a good teacher. Then your voice! It is exquisite. How old are you?"

"Nearly twenty," answered Bertha.

"Only that! Why, my dear child, your fortune lies in your voice. You ought to have come out."

Bertha shook her head. "My aunt and uncle would never let me do that—not come regularly out. Singing with the Philharmonic is different."

"They have scruples, I suppose; many people have. But, let me tell you, my dear, that a public singer, no matter though she be on the operatic boards, may be as pure and good as—ay, almost, I was going to say, as one of heaven's angels, and keep herself so until she shall be called up yonder to join them. Some women are bad, unfortunately there's no denying it; and the taint of them in the public estimation falls on all of us, and we are classed together in a lump as 'those public singers.'"

"That must be like Aunt Pen," thought Bertha.

"I was to be paid well for this concert—twenty pounds," re-

sumed Miss Carpenter, "and I shall give it to you. Your friends would not object to that, I suppose?"

Bertha flushed with amazement, stared, and trembled. Twenty pounds! She had never seen so much money in all her life!

"It is only fair that you should have it," said Miss Carpenter, "if you do the work. And now I will give you a note to carry to Mr. Mason. He does not know of my illness yet. Ask him to practise you two or three times between now and the concert night, and you'll do."

The pleasure in Bertha's tell-tale eyes was read by Miss Carpenter with a smile. The girl had undoubtedly genius. Waiting while the brief note to Mr. Mason was written, Bertha said good morning, and went away with it.

The sight of Uncle Stephen at the door of the cornchandler's, opposite, recalled Bertha from her blissful visions—for it reminded her that she might not get consent to sing even in this oratorio. He crossed hastily over to her, and heard what had taken place.

Uncle Stephen mused. "Look you, child," he presently observed, "I should like you to do this for Miss Carpenter, and I shall be proud of listening to you, standing up in the hall to sing; though I don't know what your aunt will say to it. But there's one thing, Bertha—you cannot accept money for it. You may take Miss Carpenter's parts, but you must do it as a *lady*, an amateur. To accept money would be to put you on the same footing as Miss Carpenter, don't you see, child—though I am sure I do not say it in disparagement, for everybody knows that in herself she is most worthy and estimable. You had better go in and tell her this—that you can't take any money. Say that I will allow you to take her parts, and am pleased you should, and that we'll do all we can to induce Mrs. Robarts to allow it: but that I would prefer you to do it without payment."

Back went Bertha with the message. Miss Carpenter came out of the room to hear it.

"Such nonsense!" she exclaimed. "Such absurd fastidiousness! Well, if people are silly, I can't help it. You will be doing me a very great service, Miss Dane, and I should have liked to make it worth your while.—Stay a moment: I forgot to ask you one thing just now: have you a suitable dress to sing in?"

"This is my best," said Bertha, blushing at having to confess to so much poverty."

"Oh—that! *That* won't do. Sit down for an instant, child."

Hastily scribbling another note, she directed it to Crossdale's most fashionable dressmaker, and put it into Bertha's hands.

"You know where Mrs. Tether lives? Well, when your aunt has decided that you may sing, for it seems some difficulty might lie with her, you take this note to Mrs. Tether, and say I sent you. That's all."

Mr. Mason was out of town. Gone for the day to a distant school, where he taught. He would be at the Philharmonic in the evening, the servant said, for there was to be an extra practice.

During the day Aunt Pen held out well against their hopes, calling it "a plot," and Bertha went about her work with dry, hot eyes: she was too grieved for tears. Just before tea-time the Reverend William Brook came in, availing himself of Mrs. Robarts' general invitation. Aunt Pen opened the budget to him—telling him all: of Miss Carpenter's audacious proposal, and of Bertha's wickedness in wanting to accept it.

"Could she take Miss Carpenter's parts?" asked he of Uncle Stephen.

"Ay, that she could. And I should like to hear her."

"So should I," added Mr. Brook.

Well, he talked to Aunt Pen. And what with the respect she bore him, and his beautiful sermons—for she had gone twice all the way to Little Crossdale the past day to hear him preach—and the liking she had taken for himself, Aunt Pen suffered her judgment to yield to his, and gave in. Bertha might sing for once, as it was sacred music; the praises of God, as Mr. Brook put it; but she must make her old Sunday things do on the occasion, for she'd have no new ones.

By-and-by they started for the concert-room: Uncle Stephen and Bertha, with Mr. Brook at their side. The organist was already in his place, softly trying some music that lay before him. But few of the society had come yet. Bertha presented him with Miss Carpenter's note. The news of that lady's illness had gone about then, and Mr. Mason appeared to be no stranger to it.

He looked at Bertha from head to foot as she stood before him: then read the note a second time, and again looked at her.

"Miss Carpenter says you are fit to take her parts—a dreadful contretemps that she should be ill just now!" he exclaimed testily. "*Can* you?"

The words were not very encouraging; the manner was still less so. Bertha hesitated.

"Suppose you try Miss Dane?" said Mr. Brook, coming forward to shake hands with the organist.

"But—'I know that my Redeemer liveth?'" debated the organist. "It will never do to leave out that. All Crossdale would cry out that we had cheated them."

"Try Miss Dane, Mason. I heard her sing it just now—and I can only say it satisfied me."

Mr. Mason handed Bertha the music, and struck into the chords at once. It might be well to get the trial over, he perhaps thought, while the room was comparatively empty of hearers. A slight titter ensued from some ladies already there—that meek Bertha Dane, with her shabby clothes, to take Miss Carpenter's place!

Uncle Stephen, waiting for his niece, rejoicing in this wondrous

chance to hear her under favourable auspices, strained his ears to catch the tones of the fresh young voice, which he had trained so patiently. Rather timid at first, Bertha soon forgot herself in the fascination of the music. What could be more delightful than to sing in this place—to feel one's voice ascending and swelling amid these refining influences? She forgot herself and the world; forgot her poor attire and all the rest of the drawbacks: she felt nothing but the heavenly notes, the solemn, beautiful words; she seemed almost to see the Last Day and the descent of the Redeemer.

Her voice ceased. A long breathless pause ensued, broken at last by a low murmur of entranced applause. Mr. Mason seized her hand in grateful enthusiasm.

"We shall not have to put the concert off or to change the pieces," cried he.

And as Bertha, flushed with happiness, was turning modestly away to find a seat, she saw Mr. Brook waiting to take her to one—and his eyes were wet with tears. That *he* should appreciate her was more delightful than all; even than the congratulations and the hand-shakes of those ladies who had tittered at her: and Bertha began to think that she must certainly be in Paradise.

Aunt Pen heard about it all—and from Mr. Brook: for when they got home he ran in with them for a moment to tell the news. It a little impressed even Aunt Pen, and she graciously told Bertha that if there had been time she should have had a new merino frock to sing in.

It was not needed. On Christmas Eve, two days before the grand event, some boxes directed to Miss Dane arrived from Mrs. Tether's. Aunt Pen, vowing there must be some mistake, turned out the contents: a pretty dress and mantle of grey silk, and a white bonnet. A few pencilled lines lay atop from Miss Carpenter, begging Miss Dane to give her the pleasure of wearing them, in return for the great service she was rendering her. Aunt Pen tossed her head, wondering what the audacity of those "public people" would do next.

But necessity has no law. It was so incongruous for the chief singer in the oratorio to wear an old stuff dress, that Bertha had to accept the things.

And so much did the dress change her that the Philharmonic Society could not believe its eyes when she appeared in it on the eventful day. Could that stylish, lady-like girl be the shabby little nobody who had come among them in her old plaid shawl? Aunt Pen, condescending to make one of the audience, put on her spectacles to stare as she sat by Mr. Brook.

"My goodness! Well, the child does become her finery! I always became mine. She'll be for wanting to look shy at her work after this!"

"What would the work do if you had not Bertha?" asked Mr. Brook in her ear.

"*I* don't know," tartly rejoined Aunt Pen, put out by the suggestion. "The work's not likely to do without her. Why do you invent impossibilities, William Brook?"

"But if it has to?" smiled he. "The truth is, Mrs. Robarts, that I want Bertha to help me in *my* work."

"You want—what?" cried Aunt Pen, turning her spectacles upon him.

"I want her to come to Little Crossdale, and—and take up her abode in the rectory."

"What as?—what to do?" retorted Aunt Pen, believing he was losing his senses.

"As my wife. Don't say no, dear Mrs. Robarts. Uncle Stephen will not."

"Well—I—never!" burst forth Aunt Pen, after an astonished pause. "Do you think you are dreaming?"

"I liked her the first moment I saw her, when she stood in her old shawl, a modest little girl, behind the other ladies at the rehearsal that first night; and her voice charmed me. And, later, when I found she was the daughter of the dear friends of my youth, the same sweet child I used to nurse and fondle—why, I loved her from that moment: though I daresay you will despise me for saying it. I must take her from you, Mrs. Robarts—and I don't care how soon?"

"And I daresay you'd be for letting her sing at these places again!"

"At the Philharmonic meetings—certainly. With the other ladies."

"The world's turned upside down," exclaimed Aunt Pen. "Girls asked in marriage when they are hardly out of their teens—and standing up to sing before a roomful! And what on earth am *I* to do? I shall have to keep another servant."

All things happen for the best. Aunt Pen found so much more exercise for fault-finding with two servants than she had with one, that she was in her glory. While Uncle Stephen would steal up to the rectory at Little Crossdale every day of his life, and lose himself in the melody he evoked from the grand organ, bought by William Brook for his wife.

THE EVE OF THE FEAST.

By Anne Beale.

IN the month of April, 1876, a sketch appeared in The Argosy, entitled "Come and Teach Us." It contained an account of the opening of the great Board School in Tower Street, Seven Dials, as a Mission School on Sundays, and of the cry of the children in that low and crowded neighbourhood for teachers on the Lord's Day.

We have again had an invitation to visit the school on Sunday, and accompany its members on their treat on Monday. A few details of what has been accomplished in something less than a year and a half may not be uninteresting.

Before half-past six we found the school doors besieged by a crowd of children of both sexes, a stalwart policeman in their midst to keep order and prevent ingress until the appointed hour. No sooner did the half-hour strike than the good-natured policeman yielded, and in clattered and clamoured the children, through the cool passages, up the broad stone, many-flighted staircases, into the large, airy, well-lighted rooms. There was a great uproar, and much excitement, before the motley crowd settled down; the notes of a harmonium were heard in each of the principal class-rooms, and the huge building soon resounded with hymns. The voices, if not always tuneful, were yet in tune, and came forth with volume, heart and will. Then, at the words "All cover your faces," the heads bent, and a prayer was offered up for the children, their teachers, and their school. Thus eight hundred young immortals, many of whom, two years ago, had, perhaps, scarcely heard of God, have been taught to worship Him, their Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier.

Yes: the school, which numbered when last we visited it, from three to four hundred, has now eight hundred on its books, of whom six hundred are present on this particular Sunday evening. Teachers have also multiplied, though recruits would still be gladly welcomed. A sewing-class, a singing-class, and a penny bank have also been commenced on week-day evenings during the interval; and their good effects are manifest, not only in the voices, but the appearance of the children. If every board-school throughout the land could thus be opened on Sunday for religious teaching, there would be, indeed, hope for England's future. When efficient secular training and pure spiritual instruction go hand-in-hand, then she will have obedient subjects and good citizens.

"The great unwashed" is no longer an apt epithet for the young folk of Tower Street Mission School, and, indeed, the word "ragged" would scarcely apply, though clothes of every colour, fabric, and stage of decadence appear. Faces and hands are scrupulously clean,

and even the hair neat. The heads of many little maidens bristle with curl-papers artistically twisted, for it is the eve of the treat, and all reply, when questioned, "It is against to-morrow, teacher." For three months, at least, has this treat been the goal towards which all efforts have tended. Rewards are more effectual than punishments. Indeed, all the year through, it is looked forward to with eager hope and anxiety; but, when it approaches, nothing can exceed the excitement. The sewing-classes are crowded with girls anxious to manufacture some bit of finery into a suitable garment—it matters not of what texture, provided it be only smart and fashionable. But the teacher manages to inspire independence and self-respect, through this excusable longing to be smart. She encourages them to save up their money to buy the old garments sent to her, and with their pence and shillings purchases more useful articles, to be again similarly disposed of. Any lady who has clothes to give away, however apparently unsuitable, would find them utilised in Seven Dials and St. Giles's.

The boys are, for the most part, respectably attired, for, with few exceptions, they are earning wages, and are learning to spend them with some discretion. In spite of drunken fathers or mothers, and too often wretched homes, they are learning self-reliance, which shows itself in their improved dress and manners. One tells us he earns five shillings a week as a printer's boy, another as a smith—others are engaged at the black-lead works, others at Crosse and Blackwell's—and all, who will, find occupation, from twelve years old and upwards.

And let us glance at the teachers as they sit surrounded by eager and attentive learners. They are mostly young men and women who are engaged all the week through in the great houses of business in this wonderful city of London. Labouring hard for six days, they yet devote the seventh to their poorer brethren, and often their week-day evenings.

We remembered, on our former visit, a young man who stood amidst a crowd of boys, striving hopelessly to gain and keep their attention. His efforts were vain. Now he sits quietly in one of the smaller class-rooms, the centre of an eager, earnest throng, who give him little or no trouble. He says that he, like many another, owes not only his own religious impressions, but his consequent success in life, to what he learnt at a Sunday-school, and he therefore employs his leisure in teaching others to "do likewise." He and his compeers certainly read us all a lesson of patient perseverance.

And none more effectually than the teacher of the infant class. Eighteen months ago she had seventy babies before her; she has now two hundred, for no one has, as yet, offered to aid her who has the necessary special aptitude for the work. Still she walks to and fro, hearing hymns and texts, and winning infantile hearts. Suddenly the little voices are raised, and hers surmounts the hubbub with difficulty, for the tickets for the treat are about to be distributed.

The forms are vacated, and pattering feet resound. But, alas! all cannot be made happy, for many are strangers, who have come in hopes of a ticket; others have attended irregularly, or have been naughty, and must not be rewarded.

"Are you to have a ticket—and you, and you?" we ask of the hoping, waiting little ones, who sit on with folded arms and glistening eyes.

"I don't know, teacher—I think so," they reply.

And in due time their patience is rewarded. One by one they receive the ornamented pink card, with their name in its midst, and troop off exultant.

But even amongst these are some who may yet be disappointed—whose drunken father or mother may, in a fit of passion, refuse to let them go. There is one whose father, in a fit of drunkenness, caused his wife's death. Another was found with a respectable mother and six brothers and sisters in an empty room, the so-called "bread-winner" having sold every article of furniture for drink.

"I am glad it is all gone, for there is now nothing to dispose of!" cried the despairing wife from a bundle of straw.

And still a gin-palace stands at the corner of every street! Oh, let us multiply drinking-fountains, coffee-palaces, people's cafés, tea and cocoa rooms: that our brothers and sisters may slake their thirst with what kills neither body nor soul.

"Oh, I hope it will be fine to-morrow! Do you think it will be fine?" is the cry through the great building, as the tickets are distributed in each class-room. The distributors try to deal out impartial justice, but many are the complaints. At one desk a melancholy-looking black-haired mother stands with her baby at her breast, pleading for her boy, who has lost his ticket for non-attendance; but she pleads in vain.

"We would gladly give to all, but we must draw the line," is the comment, as she disappears to join other anxious mothers who are crowding the street without.

Again the policeman is there, his back to the entrance, his face set, firm but kindly, to the expectant throng. Happy she who sees her child appear with the coveted pink ticket, and sorely disappointed and aggrieved are those who—comparatively few—are doomed to behold them without one. But for the arm of the law the gates would be forced, for amongst the crowd is many a virago whose tongue neither law nor justice can silence.

Costermongers' barrows line the streets. They were full in the morning for the Sunday market, but are mostly empty now. Many of the class have been induced to give up Sunday trading, and declare themselves better off than before; while some of the shops are also closed. But of those who continue it, numbers fill the gin-palaces that flame with light as we pass them. Here a woman reels out; there another, with children in her arms or hand, goes in.

Children, that are yet "heirs of salvation!" The streets are always full of them, despite the hundreds that fill the school. They are dancing and shouting at ten o'clock at night, although in almost every window of each six-storied house a light seems to bid them come to bed. Still matters are mending. The board-school has opened its capacious playgrounds of an evening for the children, and thus the streets are thinned, and danger to life and limb lessened. Also, in this parish of St. Giles's, the disused burial grounds of Old St. Pancras have been turned into gardens of some six or seven acres in extent, and devoted to the use of the people. Every available space should be made pleasant to the eyes and soothing to the minds of the multitudes who see and feel little but grime and depressing atmosphere.

By ten o'clock on Monday morning about five hundred children and their teachers find themselves on a broad heath in Kent, a special train having conveyed them. Happily the morning is fine, though fleecy clouds rove hither and thither, as if chasing the swift-footed children. It is a cool, grey day, made for sports and rambles, so no time is lost in pursuing them. But, alas, as the morning advances, the day darkens. A fatal combat begins up above between the clouds and the straggling sunbeams, and the clerk of the weather fails to keep order, and this our sketch is sadly damped.

But old Father Time manages better, for precisely at midday the tent fills with a hungry multitude, ready for meat and fruit pies. But not even the cravings of appetite, about to be amply satisfied, can prevent anxiety.

And, alas! the rain comes down. Now in fleeting showers—anon in heavy sheets. Cloudland has won the victory, and, before tea-time, has emptied itself of water enough to refresh the earth and drench the children. Drenched, but not daunted! No sooner does a bit of blue sky appear than they are off afar, teachers and all, returning with huge nosegays, wet with heaven's dew, and faces red with rain and excitement. Can they be the cheeks that looked so pale in the gas glare of the previous evening? Many are fresh and fair as angels' faces, and glow like the heather and poppies they carry.

Many were the bags that contained a portion of the feast for the friends at home. One pale, quiet little girl especially attracted us, whose red bag was full. Her bit of smartness was a sealskin rinking cap, which she was holding in one hand to dry.

"I'm saving it for mother and brother, please, teacher," she said apologetically; and when tea-time came, we perceived that all the cake was added to the store. "I've eat the bread-and-butter, please, teacher, and drunk the tea," she said appealingly.

Who amongst *us* would be so self-denying? and who shall describe that tea-time, whether children's or teachers'? All the five hundred filled the tent. It was an hour for the display of character and colour. The scarlet cloaks were conspicuous; polonaises of every form and

flounce prevailed; hats were adorned with wreaths new and old; most of which had been carefully covered with handkerchiefs. And if somewhat tawdry and drenched with rain, they were all clean.

"This is a hopeful sight indeed: one I never expected to see," said a gentleman present. "I have known St. Giles's forty years, and I thank God that the tide of improvement has flowed in at last. Ragged and Sunday schools have done the work."

"Hopeful even for the animals," we reflected as we stood outside the stifling tent, near a patient donkey harnessed to a provision-drag. A dozen boys had mounted the barrow, and were urging the donkey to move on. We ventured on the following astute remark.

"*I* like donkeys, but you don't like them, or you wouldn't put such a load as that upon them."

"I does like donkeys," cried several, aggrieved; and one or two jumped off and began to fondle and stroke the animal with genuine tenderness.

The rain temporarily ceased before we mustered for return to the station. A hymn, a farewell glance at the heath, and they troop off in pairs. The lane that was dry sand in the morning is now a rivulet. But the setting sun gleams on the rain-besprinkled trees, the emerald fields, the folded sheep, the gipsies' tent; and the children shout for joy. Despite the wetting, they make the country resound with their mirth as they tumble into the train and steam off for town. The teachers are excited as they take their places amongst them and listen to their various accounts of the day. A day to be remembered and discussed until another year shall have rolled away, and generous hearts are opened to repeat the pleasure.

Again are the gates of Tower Street Board and Mission School besieged by anxious mothers. Neither sorrow nor suffering can press out maternal love. Nothing but drink will do that. "Mother, here I am!"—and the soaking little ones are enfolded in the maternal arms.

Pity those who have no such arms to shelter them! For there are many who wander away, alone and uncared for, to their miserable dens. Yes, "the children's souls, which God is calling sunward," are often stifled ere they learn to glance above. Let us help to give them light.

SWAINSC

THE ARGOSY.

OCTOBER, 1877.

GABRIEL'S APPOINTMENT.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

PÆSTUM.

ONLY a few days' journey from London, and what a contrast! Contrasts there are many, no doubt, to the scene of those mighty headquarters—they may be found in quiet villages, in leafy forest-glades, in the snows of Alpine solitude; but nowhere so striking as in such a spot as this; solitary, not because man's foot has never trodden it, but because man and his dwellings have been swept away.

Yes, it is hard to believe what the guide-books tell of the once populous Greek city under the strong Roman rule—whose lifetime of war and trade, of religion and politics, of art and luxury, passed on the shores of that deep blue sea, the changing unchangeableness whereof alone remains of all the stately beauty of the scene and site. All but the mountain chain in the distance, across whose peaks the fresh wind is blowing with such refreshing coolness—the sunshine of an Italian May, bright enough to make that coolness grateful—and these lonely, desolate temples, bare of every ornament, unrelieved by any colouring, that stand as the only monument of buried gods and men.

The sun, and the wind, and the sea—this is all that is left to them, once thronged by that wonderful race at whose works we gaze with reverent delight, marvelling at the new sense they reveal; all that is left them of that dazzling faith which had imperial Rome for its worshipper, and all the passions of the world on its side! Man, with all that man could do or give, has perished around them—perished so utterly, that neither palace, nor bath, nor market, nor theatre, has left either ruin or trace: but nature spreads at their feet a carpet of wild shrubs and flowers, and brings them, in her offering of violets, a purer incense than any their altars ever knew. The

glory which was of this world, and did this world's work, is theirs no more, and never can return; but with it is also departed the covenant which linked them to its dark dominion; and they now belong to that Spirit who never dwelt in them before, carrying on His mission in the realm of thought, whether by the artist's hand, or the poet's verse, or the silent thanksgiving of the passing traveller, who knows in Whom it is his privilege to believe!

Some such thoughts as these passed through the mind of Edith Bruce, as she sat in the shadow of a massive column, where she had been left to rest while her party were reconnoitring at a little distance. The Fords and Alice Kerr had joined them a short time before; and as the latter was eager to make a sketch, her friends had gone with her to decide on the best position, and assist in the needful sheltering of herself and her drawing-board from the sun. It was happily not a very hot day, and there was a sufficient amount of flying cloud to give such effects of light and shadow as made her disregard all possible inconvenience. It took some little time, however, to fix on a spot perfectly satisfactory to Burlington Ford's fastidious eye. As a critic and connoisseur, he was more agreeable and entertaining than Sir Jesse Strahan, and his talk of books and authors opened new lines of thought to Alice as she listened; but he had so many startling opinions, and objected so strongly to being contradicted, that it was rather trying to the patience to draw with him at her elbow. By the time she had settled down to her work, Gabriel had grown restless, and would have returned to join his wife, but for courtesy towards Helen Ford, who seemed inclined to detain him in conversation.

"Miss Kerr has a better temper than I have," she remarked, turning to Bruce with a smile. "It would drive me wild to be lectured the whole time I was doing anything, and not be allowed to admire or find fault without permission from the faculty."

"She *is* a good-humoured girl," said Gabriel, cordially. They were moving slowly on towards a point of view which Helen had wished to reach; and though he felt the sun rather trying, he had no choice but to do her pleasure. When they stopped, both were silent for a few minutes. Their thoughts had gone to other matters than the ruined shrines or vanished people; he was thinking of the jewel those ruins at that moment contained—the prize he had so hardly won, and whose worth had even exceeded his estimation; and she—it would be hard to say how deep was the sadness that ever and anon, as at moments like the present, surged up in her bosom in spite of philosophy, and in spite of pride.

"Does it ever happen to you, Mr. Bruce, as it does to me, to be seized with a spirit of mutiny at the most untoward moments, and become cold, prosaic, or censorious, just because you know you are expected to be glowing with rapture and admiration? Here we are, doing our duty as tourists, and supposed to be in a state of poetical

enthusiasm, and perhaps, when I look back upon it six months hence, I may persuade myself that such was the case: but at this moment I can only think of what I heard my maid Fifine say to the courier when he handed her out—that the whole thing was *triste* to the utmost degree, and not to be named in the same day with the Madeleine!"

"I am always sorry for people who are taken to see what they cannot understand," said Gabriel, "and I rather wondered at your bringing her. I suppose she liked the drive."

"Oh, yes; she and Peretti are on such friendly terms, she could not have allowed him to sit alone. But, frankly and honestly, what is there in this scene that you admire so much?"

"I have not gone into that question: perhaps the atmosphere I carry about me now lends colouring to all I see; but surely you are joking. Your taste is too good not to make you sensible of what a picture lies before you. I could envy that child, Alice, her power of re-producing it. Look how soft those shadows are—and the colour of the sea between the columns—where can we find such except in this climate?"

"I grant you the colouring and the shadows; but the ruins themselves—shall I tell you what they make me think of most? Of what our lives will appear to us when we look back at them, and remember what we meant them to be."

He looked at her compassionately, for there was no mistaking the bitterness of soul with which she spoke; but the answer which rose to his lips he was too kind-hearted to utter. Before he had found another, she went on with increasing vehemence.

"I mean what I say. If any prophet had told the people of this place, when it was a busy town, that at such a time such a change would be, and Britons, or their representatives, would come all this way to moralise over it, would he have been believed? And if you and I could be shown in a glass what twenty years may bring, how many piles of ruin, of blanks where palaces stood, would our cities have to show?"

"One ruin, at least, they would not have for me," said Gabriel; "even this scene might preach that sermon, Miss Ford. That deep blue line has not lost a shade of colour for the fact that victims smoke no more on old Poseidon's altar; and nothing that death or trouble has in store can change the fact in my life, which is its greatest treasure."

"Take care, Mr. Bruce; boasting of happiness used to make the gods jealous, you know; and you have been such a favourite of fortune, it is time for the tide to turn, and give others a chance."

He smiled a little sadly. "I wish my friends a full share in the good fortune," he said, "but not in the bad times that went before it. I was nearly losing all, more than once."

"Don't talk of it!" was her hasty rejoinder, "it will not bear

thinking about. You were treated cruelly, and it is hard for me to believe that it was all the fault of my old friend Sir Matthew. To be sure, he had a horror of what people call genteel poverty, and wisely brought up his daughters in the same. Look at Clare Carroll —she is charming as a rich man's wife; but take away her pretty dresses and luxurious appurtenances, and she would be miserable herself, and make her husband so. People are not accountable for their education—these things become a part of you—you cannot help it."

"Whether you can or not, Miss Ford, I must correct your judgment on one point. No injustice, no cruelty, can be laid to the charge of Sir Matthew Leicester or anyone else. It was my own doing, of my own free will. The prize was well worth the labour; and now that I look back, it is partly in astonishment at my own presumption, partly in gratitude for the victory. I hope I may some day find Sir Jesse Strahan doing the same."

Her start was so violent as almost to startle him; and, through the mist that rose to her eyes, temple and landscape became blurred and indistinct, as if the Italian atmosphere had been that of a London fog. Pride came to her assistance, and the tears burnt inwardly, but did not fall.

"Sir Jesse is a man of the world," she said, with a slight laugh, "and will say whatever is correct on such occasions, no doubt. He certainly deserves some compensation, whether he will find it or not."

"Compensation?" repeated Gabriel, looking her full in the face.

Whatever she had meant by the word, she endeavoured to cover it, by hastily asking if he had seen Sir Jesse's unfortunate child.

No, never: he had heard that she was rather peculiar.

"Peculiar?" said Miss Ford, "that is a mild word. He brought her to see me, and of course I was as agreeable as I could be, but I declare the sight of her strange ways made me almost ill. It is a real misfortune in the family; and instead of keeping her at school, or in the country, her grandmother must needs bring her up to town, and actually tells people that those diamonds were being kept for her to wear when she grows up! It is a very odd business about them altogether. Captain Mitchell suggested that the good lady knew where they were, and had put them out of sight lest she should have to give them up."

"I thought they were her own."

"That is the question; Sir Jesse is cautious, evidently not liking to say a word against her; but he clearly implied they were actually the property of his late wife, otherwise he should never have allowed her to wear them. I wonder what Edith thinks of the whole matter?"

"Edith is more interested about Grace Pyne than any other part of the story. She will be for starting home to look for her if we don't take care: which is more than she would do for the diamonds."

"Of course she knows she has only to express a wish for such things, and she would have them. It is not likely she would care much about Mrs. Salisbury's. But at one time we all believed that they belonged to Sir Jesse Strahan."

He made no answer. She knew she was annoying him: but it was almost a relief to her own pain to be able to inflict pain on another, even though she shared what she gave. A signal from her brother, which she had at first disregarded, being repeated with some impatience, she observed it was time to return to Alice Kerr, only she would not overtax Mr. Bruce's politeness.

"If I give you a headache with standing in the sun, Miss Thirza will never forgive me. I am sure it is aching now."

Gabriel did not deny it: but, having escorted her back to her companions, gladly returned to his wife.

"What a relief!" he exclaimed, as he threw himself on the ground at her feet; "rest and comfort are always to be found near you. How I lived five years without you I cannot imagine. Still less, how I should live without you now."

"It frightens me to hear you say that," said Edith, caressing the head he had laid on her knee.

"What? do you say, like Miss Ford, that the gods are jealous of too much happiness?"

"Not exactly: but I feel, at times, as if I should never come up to your estimate. If you only knew how unlike your ideal woman the real one too often is—how many failures, disappointments, mistakes I could tell you of ——"

"Perhaps you have made another: but you must chance that now. It was in the bond that we should begin with a full purse, but how soon it would be emptied was left to our own discretion. My belief is that you were made for a poor man's wife."

"I might hope to be fit for it in time, by dint of trying. It is a post of honour, as well as of difficulty."

"Well, you may have to fill it yet, Edith. You know what we decided when I was arranging with Carroll: we preferred sharing his risks to leaving him at other people's mercy. I am inclined to think there is rough weather coming, and that he knows it."

"So soon? But he would never have allowed you to put in so much of your money, if he had thought the risk would be as great as this."

"Anyhow, by Alice Kerr's account, the poor fellow is not in good spirits; and somehow or other, I have a feeling as if we ought to be there. Would it be a great disappointment—one among the many you speak of—if we were to cut our tour rather short, and get back to Hartley and Clare?"

"Oh, Gabriel, how glad Clare would be! She keeps a journal letter going every day, and I can see she is not well, and misses me sadly—but I was so full of you, and of the perfect rest of being with

you alone, that it was making me selfish. We will just show Alice the wonders we promised her, and then give her her choice—whether to return with us, or go on with the Fords."

"Humph! I should rather be inclined to decide that question without consulting her at all. I don't want that innocent brain to get bewildered by Burlington's philosophy, however amusing to him the process may be. At present she does not listen to more than half he says, nor understand a quarter; but she might in time, and, judging by the effect on your friend Helen, would be none the happier for the process. Hers is a wretched case, Edith—what can we do for her?"

"I have asked myself that several times. I know she is unhappy, but she will not let me approach the subject."

"She is going to marry a man for whom she does not care one button—I could tell that by her voice—and her own misery makes her envious of other people's content. I daresay, if she saw us in a little fresh trouble, she would not hate us quite so much as she does now."

"Hate us, Gabriel? What makes you think that?"

"My experience among enemies, I suppose. I do not mean that she would hurt a hair of your head or mine, but if a word of hers could just rub a bit of the gilding off our fire-new happiness, she is not the woman to spare it."

"According to that theory, the sooner the rough weather comes, the better for her friendship. And yet she seemed so pleased to see us again, and took real pains to arrange the meeting. I do not believe you would have thought of this expedition, if they had not made a point of it, and planned it all out."

"I daresay not; in which case we owe them something. What a place this is, when one comes to think of it, for you and me, divided as we were, to be sitting in so quietly—dreaming, wise folks would say, over a Paradise of our own, as securely as if the world had never seen the fall of a stronghold, or the desolation of a shrine!"

Her heart was too full to answer in words. There are thoughts which at times lie too deep for the lips to utter; but words were not required to explain the meaning of the pressure her hand laid on his brow. Their souls were proficient in that silent language of intercommunion by which two who love can exchange thought and feeling even when both are silent; and all that was best in either nature derived hourly strength from being twined round the other.

The rapid improvement in Gabriel's health had enabled his wife to enjoy the beauty they had looked upon together; and if it be too bold a word to say their happiness had been for a brief moment perfect, it had been great enough to be laid up in her heart as a subject of thankfulness as long as she lived. It had been rest and comfort, and she had accepted it as a gift. With the renewal of social intercourse

had come back the breath of care; and it would be no longer possible to linger by the stream and sit under the shadow while others were struggling in the deep waters, or carrying their burdens in the noon-tide sun. The news that Alice brought, confirmed by Tiny's letters and Gabriel's opinion, seemed like a call back to work; and in the new strength that filled soul and body, it must have been a formidable task that would not have found her willing.

Their friends had joined them in time to go to Naples together, and thence they had made this expedition, sleeping at Salerno. The arrangements about carriages, &c., had been left to Burlington Ford's experience and the energy of his obliging courier, Peretti, whom he had engaged on Sir Jesse Strahan's recommendation. Peretti, a dark, active fellow, who talked English, French, and Italian, and all badly, was very popular with his employers, and especially with the French maid whom Miss Ford had engaged in Paris. If he had not all the experience in Continental travelling that he ought to have had, his readiness and audacity covered his blunders, and Mademoiselle Fifine's tact never failed to come in to his aid. Alice had very soon discovered how little he really knew, but one hint to that effect was so decidedly put down as to prevent her offering a second.

There had been some talk at the hotels about the well-known topic of brigands, and a good deal of fun had been made of Alice's eager desire to see one; but the courier, when applied to, by no means shared the hilarity of his master, and would not agree to any plan for visiting Pæstum, unless he could make sure of trusty comrades to drive the carriages. He went on beforehand to make due preparations, and the result had so far justified his experience; the horses had gone well, the hamper of luncheon had been unexceptionable, and there was every prospect of a pleasant drive back, if they did not put it off too long. As it was, no one showed signs of moving; Alice was absorbed in her drawing, and Burlington Ford was too well amused by watching its progress, and hearing himself talk, to heed any hints of his sister's about the time. It was not till after several private consultations with Fifine, who could not conceive how people could come so far to look at anything so dull and hideous, that Peretti ventured at last to approach his master, and suggest that they had some distance to go.

There was an outcry of dismay at first, but Helen supported the prudent side, and it was agreed that Peretti should go and summon the drivers, who had put up their horses at a little inn, the only house within sight; while they were putting to, the drawing might possibly be finished, and Alice worked with all her strength, feeling as if she would have given a year or two of life—say, after eighty, or thereabouts—to be allowed to sit still for an hour longer. It seemed an incredibly short time before wheels and dust announced themselves: and she was too much occupied in securing her board and colours to attend, at first, to the discussion that was taking place,

till called upon, suddenly, to give her voice in the proposed arrangements.

Then she became aware that only one carriage was forthcoming. The other, to the despair of Peretti, had met with an accident to the wheels; and it could not be used till the blacksmith had been, whom the driver had gone off to fetch. How long the whole matter would take he could not say, but he shrewdly suggested that the delay might be considerably shortened by his presence; and, therefore, if the ladies would trust themselves to him, he proposed to drive after his comrade as fast as possible, and make sure that he did not go to sleep on the way. Indeed, they might be able to secure another carriage, which could be sent back for the gentlemen—only, there was no time to be lost. He was ready to die of grief that this should have happened, but what more could he do? The carriage would not hold them all, and it was not safe for any one of the party to be left alone.

Gabriel saw no difficulty in the matter; the ladies would go on, of course, and Burlington and he would follow on foot; but to this Mr. Ford made an expressive grimace of dissatisfaction, and Mrs. Bruce, striking in with the decision of one to whom all must give way, refused to be separated from her husband. And after a great deal of talking on all sides, it ended in the brother and sister, accompanied by Fifine (who had shown lively symptoms of impending hysterics), setting off under Peretti's escort, promising to send back help, of some sort or other, without a moment's needless delay. Alice's choice had been to remain, with some secret idea of getting another hour at her sketch; but when Burlington was beginning to suggest that he should remain also, his sister's alarmed entreaty for his protection became so vehement, that he could only acquiesce with a shrug.

The three who were left behind stood watching the departing carriage in silence till it was out of sight.

"Well, ladies," said Gabriel, as they turned and looked at each other, "this is a curious predicament for you, and a splendid opportunity for me. Of course it is all a trick, and we shall have the brigands here presently. What would the Ironhand say if he could see us at this minute?"

CHAPTER XXIX.

A SURPRISE FOR MR. FORREST.

The weather had shown symptoms of changing while this was going on; and though the prospect of being caught in the rain might not be agreeable, all rejoiced in the comparative coolness of the air, and Alice was privately of opinion that the delay was a very good thing. She had hardly had any undisturbed enjoyment of her friends before;

and it was delightful now to explore the temples in their company, Edith producing for the public benefit the information she had been collecting out of guide-books, and Gabriel trying hard to supplement it from the recollections of school-day studies—a treasury not so well stored, he confessed, as it ought to have been. Apologising for his deficiencies, he observed that if he had only had the brains of the Iron-hand, he should have been a much better scholar. This led to a discussion on the merits of the absent Martin, when he took occasion to thank Alice for the share she had had in drawing that good fellow out of his shell—a work which very few would have been able to accomplish so easily.

"There was a poor dog once, which had been brutally hurt, and ran for shelter into the barrack yard where I was giving an order," said Gabriel. "He was a powerful beast, and as he lay panting and glaring before the stable door, he looked so wild and savage in his fright and pain, that none of the men liked to go near him. I was considering, myself, how to get into his confidence, and not into his mouth, when up came a little girl, the colour-sergeant's child, walked straight up to the poor beast, sat down by his side, and put her arm round his neck. I never was so frightened in my life for a moment, as he might have killed her before I could possibly cut him down; but, if you will believe it, he was tame directly, licked her fingers, and let her do with him just as she liked."

"And did he recover?"

"Oh, yes; he lived to be the pet of the company and to get me into no end of trouble, for he was an incorrigible poacher. You put me very much in mind of little Bess."

"I hope you will not get into trouble again, then. It would be very odd if I were afraid of Mr. Martin, after he had been so very kind to me. I don't think," continued Alice, emboldened by the kind sympathy in Edith's eyes, "that either of you ever half understood what you did that day when I met you first—how utterly helpless and miserable I was, till you took me under your care, nor how I enjoyed the journey afterwards—feeling so safe, as if nothing could touch me!"

"You were not even afraid of Wily Wilkins, I remember," said Gabriel, smiling.

"Not a bit then: but I have been since. I am almost certain I heard him one day at Highlevels."

He begged her to explain: which she readily did, and perceived that her narrative made a serious impression.

"I wonder what Grace Pyne could tell us about it," he said at last.

"You do not suspect her, Gabriel?" said Edith, anxiously.

"I do not know what to think. There is something about it all that makes me feel, more and more, that we ought to be on the scene of action, get at the bottom of this worry, and have done with it.

Alice, shall you think us very shabby if we take you home sooner than we promised—postponing Italian art to a happier opportunity?"

"Are you going home, then, so soon?"

"We had been talking it over," said Edith, "and think it will be better to do so. But if you would rather stay with the Fords, for the sake of study ——"

"I would rather go back with you. Mr. Ford is very clever, and all that, but I don't care for him. I like talking to Mr. Martin much better—he is so much more original, and says what he really means. I only wish one thing ——"

"What?" said Gabriel, kindly, as she hesitated with a blush.

"Only that you would let me be in your confidence, like Martin and Joel. I would show you that I could be quite as faithful."

"I should think you would. Come—Mrs. Bruce has had standing about enough for the present, and if we can find her a seat, you shall hear all I can tell."

There was much to interest both hearers in what he told: Edith knew the leading facts already, but many of the details were new, even to her; and so fully was her attention absorbed, that she not only forgot the flight of time, but also her own increasing sense of fatigue. The heat of the weather during the last few days had tried her strength, and the lassitude against which she had been contending during the whole of the present excursion, betrayed itself to her husband's eyes, in spite of her attempt to conceal it. He glanced at his watch and then at the distance, muttering an observation by no means complimentary either to courier or blacksmith.

"Never mind," said Edith, cheerfully, "a scene such as this is so rare, we must not grumble at being detained in it. Have you bespoken Alice's sketch, by the way? It will be a valuable memento of our adventure in a place where we three never expected to meet."

"Is it still to be had for the bespeaking?—that is the point," said Gabriel. "I thought Burlington had taken care of that."

"He has nothing to do with it," protested Alice. "If you like it, that is enough; but I only wish I could just give it another half-hour. The clouds, you see, have passed off, and the shadows are so exquisite—would you mind my going back to that point where I began, till we hear the carriage coming?"

"But there is nothing for you to sit upon."

"I do not mind how long I stand when I am interested."

Her heart was evidently in the matter. A glance was exchanged between her friends; which resulted in Gabriel, having arranged a resting-place for his bride to the best of his ability and resources, taking possession of the artist's drawing materials, and announcing his purpose of superintending her work, perhaps of administering some wholesome criticism. It was no use arguing with people who settled things so quietly, and Gabriel assured her it was high time she understood that his nerves never would endure argument; they were

only just capable of standing the wear and tear of his own opinions —not anyone's else.

"Then do you always mean to have your own way in the world?"

"Always—when my wife, and my wife's confidential attendants, and Martin, and Joel, have had theirs. Of course they must be served first—at least, they will try for it. Now then, is there a drop of water left for you? Yes, luckily this flask was not touched. If it had been Burlington's Château Margaux, I doubt if we should have had the trouble of taking care of it."

They moved away accordingly, and Edith's eyes followed them as they went, though so completely was her resting-place shadowed by the massy column above her head, that they could hardly see her when they looked back. For a while their movements amused her; then her thoughts began naturally to turn upon the scenes her husband had been describing; and as she remembered for whose sake he had encountered those risks, it seemed to her as if her whole life's devotedness would be too little to give in return. Proof after proof of his truth and tenderness passing through her mind, she was fast losing herself in a soft, happy dream—all the happier for its foundation of waking reality—when it was suddenly dispelled in a manner that sent the blood to her heart, and, for a moment, suspended her breathing.

Creeping swiftly along, with bowed head and wary foot, his eyes ever and anon glancing towards the unconscious pair, now busy over the drawing, the figure of a man passed noiselessly across the temple, and disappeared. Another followed; who also vanished. And then a third, armed with a gun, took up a position behind a column, as if to observe what happened, keeping his weapon in readiness for action, but his person carefully in the shadow.

All that she had heard and read about Italian brigandage flashed across Edith's brain, and it required a powerful effort of self-control to keep her reasoning faculties clear for the alarming emergency. It was evident that she had not yet been observed; the attention of the thieves, if such they were, being fixed on the other two. It was so long past the hour when their carriage ought to have arrived, that it could not be far distant; a signal, could it only be given, might at once give warning to Gabriel, and quicken the pace of the expected succour. The question was—how could a signal be given?

By one of those strange mental processes which are so completely beyond the rule and measure of our philosophy, an anecdote she had heard years ago related by her father, illustrative of the coolness and heroism displayed by an officer's wife in India in the hour of danger, came back almost unconsciously to her memory, and was hailed as an inspiration.

Rising cautiously to her feet, and imitating the tactics of the enemy, she glided from column to column, still keeping in the rear of the sentinel; who, little aware of being so intently watched,

remained nearly as motionless as the pillar by which he stood. When Edith was within about thirty yards of his post, he bent a little forwards, raising the muzzle of his piece, and she had a clear view of his profile against the sky.

It was a face she had seen that morning, as she returned from an early walk; that of a man who was in eager conversation with Peretti. The latter had appeared much annoyed by his importunity, and dismissed him with some sharpness. And now he was here, on such an errand as this! Indignation was her first emotion—her next, a thrill of new terror. If this were indeed a plot, and they had been intentionally betrayed, for what purpose had Peretti done it? He came from England—the Fords engaged him on Sir Jesse's recommendation—he was with them at Dover—ha! and was it not there that Gabriel thought he recognised the voice of the man who struck him down? Was this all part of that conspiracy against him, which met them at every turn? O merciful Heaven! spread a shield over him once more!—and give me, but for an hour, the courage and strength of a man!

The two confederates, who had availed themselves of such cover as could be afforded by the long grass and tangled weeds to get behind the object of their pursuit, were now crouching in a dry ditch, partly masked by fragments of stone, whence they could reconnoitre the ground, and select a favourable moment for their attack. Apparently, the capture of an English gentleman was not expected to be very easy work, for it was some little time before a white handkerchief, the appointed signal to their comrade, was shown for a moment, responded to immediately by a change of attitude on his part. Putting one knee to the ground, and making a rest for his gun of the other, he had just stooped his head for a deliberate aim, when a shawl was suddenly flung over his eyes, and his weapon pushed aside. In his terror and confusion he pulled the trigger, and the sharp report rang out on the stillness, followed by a piercing cry.

"What was that? A gun?"

"Yes, and a scream. Make that fellow get on, sir, will you? or I shall take the reins myself."

The speakers were seated in an open carriage-and-four, and a significant sentence from the first had its immediate effect on the driver, who put his horses into a gallop. The temples came into sight; they swept along the road like the wind. But the hearts of the two Englishmen were throbbing with so much impatience that they could hardly wait till the smoking steeds were pulled up, before they both leaped to the ground, followed by a boy in a tattered red shirt and cap, and trousers grimed with coal and tar, who had been perched at the back of the carriage. Before either of the three had decided which way to turn, a joyful cry from a woman's voice dis-

pelled all doubt, and Alice Kerr rushed up, breathless, with extended hands.

"Mr. Carroll! Mr. Martin! Oh, this is a relief indeed! Did you meet the others? Did they send you for us?"

Her agitation was so great that she hardly knew what she was saying, and, between laughing and crying, was so nearly in hysterics that it was some minutes before she could make herself intelligible. No, no, she was not hurt—it was a man who had been shot, and they did not know who had done it, but Mr. Bruce was there, trying to get him out of the ditch—hark! he was calling for help. And she would have rushed back, but Hartley stopped her, told Martin to take her to the carriage, and went to assist Gabriel himself. Under other circumstances, Martin would have been foremost to do the same, but his first thought now was to soothe the frightened girl, who, he found, was trembling from head to foot, and clung to his supporting arm as if she could not stand without it.

"Poor little bird!" he murmured, compassionately, pressing her arm in his, and looking down at her tear-stained cheeks with a tenderness that transformed the whole cast of his dark features. "You have been cruelly startled; but don't be afraid, I'll take care of you. They should not have brought you out here, and left you like this; but *I'll* not leave you again till you are safe. I only wish I had never let you come alone with those people: they had no idea how precious you were!"

He had taken the best possible method of restoring Alice's senses. She could hardly believe her own ears, and still less her own eyes, when she looked up in his, and saw they were soft and glistening. Instinctively she drew herself away from his support, and was beginning an answer in defence of her absent friends, when the sound of a sharp whistle brought back her alarm, and she pointed in terror to the ruined temple.

"She is there—in there—and the robbers must be with her! they are whistling for the rest of the gang! Oh, what shall we do?"

He caught her up in his arms, placed her in the carriage, and shut the door.

"You will be all right there," he said, "and I'll see after the whistling."

And with a bound and stride or two he was out of sight, leaving her divided between shame at her own cowardice, and admiration of his gallantry. There was little opportunity for displaying the latter; but the object that met his eyes was startling enough, for it was the face and form of Edith Bruce, leaning against a grey column, and resembling it in hue and rigidity. The boy in the red shirt, from whom the whistle had proceeded, was standing at a little distance, gazing at her with much perplexity.

"She give me a turn, she did," was his remark, as Martin appeared. "I almost thought it was the waxworks. What have they been and done to her?"

"Mrs. Bruce," said Martin, gently, taking her by the hand. The touch and the sound were not without effect; the stiffness relaxed, and her eyes lost some of their stony glare. But she was unable to speak.

"Mrs. Bruce, you are tired, and the carriage is outside—will you come?" And he drew her a few steps forward. She stopped suddenly short, gasping out a question. "Is he dead?"

"Who, madam?"

"Mr. Bruce. I heard the shot and the cry; and you are come to break the news, I know. You will take me to him now, won't you?" she added, in a voice so strangely quiet that it went to his heart.

"The Captain is close by, madam—you shall go to him directly;" and he made a sign to the boy, which the quick wit of the latter comprehended at once. He darted off like an arrow: and before Edith knew what was being done to her, she was in the carriage in Gabriel's arms.

It took a little while to bring back her colour, and calm her fluttering pulse after the terrible shock she had received; but his voice and caresses seemed to give her new life, and a burst of tears having relieved her brain, she was able by degrees to regain composure, and explain what had taken place. The courage which had kept her up, while the peril was imminent, had given way when she imagined that the cry had proceeded from her husband: who might have been injured through her interference—and she knew nothing of what had passed afterwards. The discharged gun was lying a few yards from the spot where it had been fired, and the fellow who fired it had escaped, as well as the comrade of the wounded man; leaving the latter to the generosity of the *forestieri*, to whom he roundly declared that he was the victim of some mistake, being himself in charity with all the world, and the most innocent of human beings.

What to do with him was the difficulty; but their driver, who took a lively interest in the whole affair, contrived at last to procure the assistance of some herdsmen, and arrange for his being conveyed to a cottage, where he would be taken care of till the police, if required, could examine him. His wound was slight, and Gabriel promised the peasants ample reward if they attended to him properly.

"And if you let him escape before the police come up," added Hartley Carroll, in English, "I shall be disposed to reward you double. The last thing any of us want is to be let in for a prosecution."

He was in a fever of impatience to get them all safely seated in the carriage, with the horses' heads turned homewards. "I'll tell you everything as we go along," was his answer to Edith's inquiries, "but such sight-seeing as this is a little too exciting to be pleasant, and I want to know you are all actually under cover. It is lucky, Edith, my dear, that there are no more of you to be married; my hair would turn grey very soon if things went on like this."

The driver, who, while refreshing his horses with a mouthful of corn, had cast several anxious glances at the sun, seconded Hartley's re-

marks by a muttered one of his own—that they had a long way to go on a lonely road: and the party taking the hint, were soon in their seats, only waiting for Martin. In another minute or two he appeared, followed by his small satellite—the latter with an air of great importance, and very much out of breath, shouldering the unloaded gun.

"Up with you behind and guard the rear," said Hartley. "All safe, Ironhand?"

"As far as one can see. But you might hide a dozen men easily in some of those places. The sooner we are off, the better."

A few words in Hartley's best Italian were responded to on the coachman's part by a smiling nod and a crack of his whip; and the carriage rolled swiftly away, without a word of regret from any of the travellers at leaving the scene behind. The adventure had been trying enough to destroy all sense of the picturesque or the sublime. It was not till they had gone a couple of miles that Edith thought of looking back, and then for the first time recognised the tanned face and saucy grin of Bill Close.

Her exclamation of surprise caught Martin's ear as he sat on the box.

"Yes," he said, "that is a present I am taking home to Mr. Forrest. The good gentleman will sleep all the better for knowing such a precious article is safe."

Edith looked at the boy; who evidently quailed beneath her eye. She only said, in a tone of gentle reproach, that she could not have believed one of their boys would ever have served them so.

"I say, Mr. Martin, you know you promised to speak a word for me—you know I've done what I could, and stood by you faithful, now didn't I?" cried Bill Close, clutching the gun so viciously that it was a fortunate circumstance it had been discharged. Martin responded to the appeal, and gave his master a significant glance which he well understood.

"I think, if Mrs. Bruce will kindly look over bygones, we may make something of the youngster yet. As far as I can make out, he was taken in by a rogue, and has had a hard time of it since: and he has done us a good turn to-day, as Mr. Carroll can bear witness."

"Indeed he has," said Hartley; "we should not have been here now but for him. I was quite on a wrong scent about your movements, when that runaway student turned up on the quay at Naples, and told us where you were gone. Now then, my good friends, I have something serious to say to you. The sooner we are out of this scrape the better. Just let me hear your story first, and then I will tell you as much as is necessary of mine."

Their story was soon told. Though Edith could not recall her own share without a shudder. It did not escape Hartley's notice.

"It comes to this," he said, with an earnestness unlike his ordinary careless manner: "there has been a plot to rob you—of that we are morally certain—and Martin and I, having received a private hint that it would be so, have travelled night and day to help you out of

it. We must not betray confidence; but we know, from a sure source, that Ford's courier is in league with your enemies, Bruce—and I believe it is to him you are indebted for that knock on the head, as well as for the fire at St. Edmund's. Our young scamp behind knows all about that. Poor Edith!—it is an atrocious thing altogether; but they have not got him yet, my dear, and shan't get him, if we can help it. Only see here—we have not a shadow of proof as to this last business. None of you were assaulted; and they might swear, through thick and thin, that the lady took alarm at nothing—that the fellow was aiming at a mark, or a crow, or what you please, but never dreamed of injuring the English strangers. Indeed, they might turn the tables upon us, and bring in a heavy action for the shot that hit the wrong man. What we have to do is to appear unconscious of any harm having been intended, and get home as fast as we can. I shall warn Burlington privately about his treasure, and leave him to do as he thinks proper: but we'll be off to-morrow by the first train, Bill Close and all."

"Will the police be satisfied with our leaving the matter unsettled?" asked Gabriel.

"Trust that to me; I have had dealings with Italian justice before. They will be too glad to be saved trouble, especially if we defray all expenses. It takes some time for them to begin an affair, but woe betide us if we have to wait for the end of it. And, to tell you the truth, I shall be glad to get that boy safely out of the country, for they will know he gave evidence against them, and may find a surer way of revenge."

"But how came he among them?" asked Gabriel.

"Well, the fact is (with all due respect to St. Edmund's) that that select neighbourhood abounds with rogues, and our young friend was unwise enough to let them use him as a cat's-paw, after which they knew better than to let him come under old Davie's hand again. They put him on board a boat, manned partly by English and partly by Italians, and there he got enough of the rope's end, I fancy, to make him home-sick. At any rate, it was of his own accord that he made himself known to the Ironhand, and put us on the right scent. He says that courier went on board the vessel before he left Naples to engage one of the hands to help him—I presume in the job of to-day. Bill knew him again, in spite of his altered costume, as a certain Tonio, who had been among his old tempters, and a great ally of a certain Mr. Jones."

"Oh, Hartley!"

"Aye, it is so, my dear; we are all in deep water, but I mean to do my best to pull you out of it. Mind what I say and do, and take your cue from me. Here comes the storm—I thought we should hardly get in without a wetting. Anything for variety. The last time I was here was early in March, and I was nearly cut in two with *tramontana*."

CHAPTER XXX.

WAR TO THE KNIFE.

Helen Ford, to Sir Jesse Strahan.

"NAPLES.

". . . By this time you have, of course, seen the curious versions of our story, as given by the correspondents of English newspapers. We have been taken by brigands—the brigands have been taken by us; we have been the victims of a political conspiracy—we are the most dangerous of conspirators ourselves; we were murdered one day, and brought to justice the next. And, as a natural result of such contradictory evidence, we have been decidedly in fashion here, and everybody turns to look round at the strangers who had the encounter with the banditti. That neither of us set eyes on any of them, or knew anything about the business till it was over, matters not at all. I heard myself spoken of by an argumentative Italian as the English-woman who shot the brigand chief, and am not sure that my portrait has not been already exhibited in character—not quite so happy a likeness as Alice Kerr would have drawn.

"The real hero and heroine, as you know, ran away directly after the battle, and Burlington says they took the real brigand with them. It certainly is a very singular thing, that Mr. Bruce should be always meeting with these adventures, which befall nobody else; and still more so, that somebody in England should have known all about this one beforehand, and arrived just as it was going on. You will say, as I did at first—he arrived to the rescue, bringing Hartley Carroll with him—but how did he know it? that is the question. I begin myself to think it was rather suspicious, but when Burlington dropped a hint to that effect, our friend took it up so hotly, they would have quarrelled had not my brother apologised. Peretti took the whole affair so much to heart, I was rather afraid there might have been a quarrel there; but he contented himself with resigning his situation, and left us at an hour's notice—almost broken-hearted, says my Parisian, Fifine, who visited his wrongs on me, and was worse than useless for two days. Her temper is something alarming, but she is a genius in her way, and one must put up with something. I have seen a costume that would be charming for dear Myra, but which only French hands could make, or put on properly.

"My love to the dear original child. I have a set of filigree ornaments for her, which will, I hope, give pleasure. Apropos—does Burlington's brigand theory throw any light on the mystery of the diamonds? *Somebody must have been behind scenes*—that there can be no doubt about—and if you inquire carefully, you will find he was often at Highlevels, and on confidential terms with the servant who has disappeared."

"Mrs. Bilson wishes to know if she can speak with you a moment, Sir Jesse."

"Has she brought me a note?"

"No, Sir Jesse. Only her business is particular, she says."

The master made an acquiescing sign, and his daughter's maid was ushered into his presence: where she no sooner found herself alone than she began to weep pitifully.

"Take a chair, my good woman, and compose yourself," said he, blandly; then resuming the newspaper he had just laid down, went on reading as if she had not been there. As he expected, her tears soon ceased to flow when not noticed, and she began to enumerate the exertions she had made in the service of Miss Strahan—the days of labour, and nights of care, she had so cheerfully borne for the dear young lady—and now to be told she was never to come near her no more—it was just enough to cut her to the heart, and somebody must have been poisoning the lady's ears, which no lady should ever listen to a story against them as served them well, and she couldn't have believed it of Mrs. Salisbury, a lady spoken well of by high and low. And here she would have wept again; but a movement of her auditor's hand towards the newspaper recalled her to business, and she wound up with the hope that Sir Jesse would take her case into consideration, and do something to repair her wrongs and soothe her wounded feelings.

"If I understand you rightly, you have been dismissed by Mrs. Salisbury?"

"Yes, Sir Jesse—on a day's notice."

"Your wages have been correctly paid, I hope—and all that was due?"

"I have not a word to say against that, Sir Jesse—only money doesn't pay for what one feels, sir——"

"But that is the question at present. You have no claim to lay before me?"

"Well, sir, it is, and it isn't, because, you see, one's good name is a thing you can't put a price on; and when Miss Strahan, which I mention with love and respect, calls me a thief to my face, and screams at me that I took her grandmamma's diamonds, so that the whole house can hear, why, there it is, you see, Sir Jesse. A month's wages, board or no board, don't make up to you for that; and it will be said all over London that I was the person as spirited the box away, and got a case sent down to Devonshire as like it as two peas—when all the while I was making up my young lady's new frocks to be introduced to her friends."

"Who put that into Miss Strahan's head?"

"I can't say, indeed, Sir Jesse. But ever since the young lady heard the diamonds was gone, she has not been like herself at all: and that makes it the harder to leave her, poor dear innocent lamb."

"Of course; and the sooner we trace the thieves, the better for all

parties, Bilson. I am sorry your feelings have been hurt, but in nervous cases, like hers, a fancy cannot be argued with. I will endeavour to obtain a situation for you elsewhere. And, by the way, I hope you have never mentioned to anyone how much that servant of Mr. Bruce's seems to have been hanging about Highlevels, and even taking the liberty of conversing with Miss Strahan. Being a man without known friends or relations, and brought up in the backwoods, it might lead to unpleasant things being said and suspected—which would be a poor return, if he only meant civility."

"Certainly, Sir Jesse—I should never think of breathing a syllable about it. Only when he found gold under the apple tree, where it never was before or since, and went single-handed to live at Low-levels, with a dog and a loaded gun, which he threatened to fire at any soul that tried to get in, I did think it was not all right, Sir Jesse, for Miss Strahan to be learning games and conjuror's tricks from him; and I may have said as much. I can't swear I didn't."

"His conjuring tricks are nothing in comparison to the one you mentioned just now, Mrs. Bilson. If we could find out how *that* was done—I would reward anyone very handsomely who could bring me private information that would enable me to trace that performance home."

There was a short silence. Mrs. Bilson looked at the carpet, and Sir Jesse polished his glasses.

"Did it cross your head, sir, may I ask, that him as knew one conjuring trick might know another?" she asked, presently.

"Well, you put it into my head, Bilson, certainly; and in case of our recovering the property, as I trust we shall, it can do no harm to collect evidence which would prevent suspicion from lighting on innocent parties. That poor young woman—Grace Pyne, I think you call her—I fear that there can be little doubt of *her* guilt. And she seems to have been rather a friend of the Australian's—was she not?"

Mrs. Bilson shook her head, and gave it as her opinion—though she wouldn't speak against a fellow-servant for all that gold could buy—that a more artful, smooth-spoken young woman, with her sanctified dress, just cut to please the ladies, and her airs about going to church just because they did, never came across her knowledge; and nothing would surprise her less than to hear she had come to disgrace. But what could you expect, coming out of such a neighbourhood as St. Edmund's?

"Did you ever hear her mention any of her friends in it? Did she correspond with anyone?"

"Yes, with one or two, she did; she wrote letters when she was supposed to be at her work; and I remember joking with her once, Sir Jesse, all in good-humour like, because one was to a Mr. Martin in the city. She told me he was no relation to the other Martin: but whether it was so or not, I can't say, Sir Jesse."

"Exactly so; but it seems to me, Mrs. Bilson, that it would be a very good work on your part to find out this unhappy young woman, and persuade her to come to me. You may promise her safety and reward; and I need not say, your own reward shall not be confined to that of your conscience. No one ever serves me unpaid, Mrs. Bilson: and as your time is now on your own hands, you cannot employ it better than in collecting evidence. And all you can collect, you will bring to me in person. Accept this sovereign for your trouble, and I will wish you good morning."

He resumed his paper, and she retired with a profusion of curtsies.

"A right noble gentleman!" she observed to Mr. Simmons, with an enthusiasm which found no echo in the breast of that confidential attendant. He only asked if she had seen the news—how nearly Lady Strahan that was to be had been carried off by brigands?

"Yes, they was talking about it this morning," said Bilson. "What a world we live in, Mr. Simmons! there's no honesty left anywhere. I suppose the police come here pretty often, to bring you information, and so on—don't they?"

Mr. Simmons nodded, and yawned. The story of the robbery was stale now, and he was tired of it.

"Has anyone among them happened to have a terrible cough, and his hand in a sling, by chance? They meet with all kinds of bad usage, poor fellows, and deserve the best of treatment from us, I think, Mr. Simmons."

"And get it, as a rule," said that functionary. "But if it is the man you had at Highlevels, he has certainly not turned up yet. Are you anxious to find him?"

"Well, he did seem so grateful for a little kindness, poor man. I should like to know if he took the mixture that I recommended for his cough, Mr. Simmons."

"Very likely. Then your quickest way of finding him is to find the young woman who is missing, for she knows more of him than you do. There is my master's bell—good day to you."

He smiled as he saw the change in the woman's countenance, and showed her out with scant ceremony.

It was one of those hot days, which London sometimes has to endure, on which it seems almost impossible for the routine of labour to be carried on. The amount of suffering, without actual illness or pain, which is borne as a matter of course, not only in many a stifling court and alley, but in large shops and warehouses, behind desks and counters, where the wealth of the world is circulating, can hardly be understood by those who have never known that intense craving for fresh air and coolness which haunts the dwellers of the town. Though no lover of the country for its own sake, Mr. Plummer had his share of this longing on the present occasion, and sat at work in his close office in the city, with a general sense of disgust at himself, his business, and, above all, his patron, Sir Jesse.

"He keeps me stifling here half the day, in case he should call," he grumbled to himself, "and it never occurs to him that I may have other things to do, and other places to go to. Night and day, I am to be his slave, brain and body, and take what pay he thinks fit to give me; and, if he is out of temper, with sharp words besides! And all this, just because he knows a thing or two against me, not half as bad as what he does himself every day. He had better take care. Let me just find out something to balance our little account, and we'll not go on like this. I am sick of it already."

He lifted his eyes to the clock. Which, by its improved regularity, did credit to the skill of Mr. Jones.

"Past his hour for to-day, at any rate. I may shut up presently, and get a breath of air on the river—if there is such a thing to be had. Ah! there he comes." And as the great man entered the office, Mr. Plummer rose with rather more than his usual deference, and while advancing an easy chair for Sir Jesse's use, expressed a hope that he was not fatigued by the heat.

"It is hot," said Sir Jesse, indifferently, "but work must be done, whether it be June or December. Mine must, at least. Have you any news yet?"

"No, Sir Jesse, I have not. I thought we should have heard something by this time from Jones: but you cautioned me against alarming him by inquiring too soon."

"Begin to inquire now, then; and let him know, if possible, that his time is the present—in a month or so it may be too late. The police are on the alert, and have made one or two shrewd guesses. It is all I can do to keep them quiet."

"That is a serious consideration," said the lawyer.

"Of course it is: and it shows how necessary it is to be prepared for all contingencies. Oblige me by running your eye over these points I have noted down, which will give you your instructions how to act when required."

Mr. Plummer took the paper with his usual readiness. But his countenance altered as he perused the contents, and he remained silent for some minutes after.

"Well, sir," said Sir Jesse, sharply, missing the expected comment of approval, "anything you object to there?"

"Object? No, indeed, Sir Jesse—far from it. You are the best judge in these matters, and my pride and duty are to carry out your instructions. But this is something unusual, and requires a little consideration."

"If I have considered it, you may spare yourself the trouble. I did not come to discuss the matter, but to be obeyed. Do you understand me?"

Mr. Plummer bowed. It cost him an effort, but he was not strong enough yet to rebel.

"You will draw the attention of the authorities, with whom you

will communicate, to the facts I have thrown together, and let them judge for themselves, only hinting at the reward which you have heard would be given. You will suggest his being watched and followed; and, if possible, searched on suspicion. Unless I am much mistaken, the first attempt on their part to meddle with him would lead to his committing a breach of the peace: and that would make all easy."

The lawyer made a mechanical sign of assent. But the eye of his employer detected his reluctance, and darkened under his bent brow.

"There is one point more for you to look into, Plummer; and it is one of considerable importance. Some one—I cannot tell you who—has been betraying my counsel: and that is a thing I never forgive. No, sir! you may smile as you please, but you have still something to learn, if you suppose anyone can stop short when he will, who takes service with me. Those who do my work, I reward as they deserve; those who stand in my way, stand at their own risk; but I would advise anyone to think twice who meant to play me false, or leave my work half done."

"Have I had the misfortune to displease you, Sir Jesse?"

"You, Plummer? Scarcely. If I were displeased, you would not hear of it from me. You know your own interest and safety too well to hesitate about any business I think fitted for your capacity. And if you have been a little remiss lately, you will make amends, no doubt, by increased diligence for the future. Don't trouble yourself to move—I can let myself out."

And, with a slight acknowledgment of Mr. Plummer's anxious salutation, he departed. Leaving that gentleman in a state of mind that made him almost forget the sufferings of his body.

He sat for full half an hour without stirring. Then, as if he could bear it no longer, thrust the paper into his pocket, locked up his desk, left word with the porter below that he should be back in a couple of hours, and walked rapidly along the hot streets, without a thought of rest or refreshment, till he reached the model lodging house. Where he was already known as a visitor.

His inquiry for Mr. Martin brought out Mrs. Dennis, fresh from the washtub. Oh, yes, the gentleman could go up if he pleased; it made no odds if he did wake the old man up—he had nothing on earth to do but to go to sleep again. And with that gracious permission she hurried back to her washing—it being her frugal practice, whenever she was engaged to get up her employer's linen, to combine with it a little of her own.

Mr. Plummer asked no more questions, but went up to the old man's room. It certainly displayed no superabundance of womanly care; no neat hands such as those of Grace and Lucy had supplied their place; and grate, and bookshelves, and writing-table wore the appearance of that slovenly neglect which is so peculiarly sad in the

chamber of feeble old age. The lawyer smiled grimly to himself as he noted this; but as it had no particular bearing on his errand, he let it pass, and addressed the old man with kindly solicitude, regretting to see that he had been so unwell. Why had he not let him know?

"I very nearly did," said old Erasmus. "I should, very soon, if you had not called. I want to make a new will: can you do it?"

Mr. Plummer could: and would, with pleasure.

"Then, if you will be good enough to hand me my desk, I will show you what I jotted down—to be all ready against you came."

Mr. Plummer brought the desk, helped him to fumble out his keys, and got his own portable writing materials ready for immediate service if required. It all took time, and both patience and gentleness were necessary, for the old man's strength was evidently much broken; but the lawyer was in no hurry. He chatted pleasantly during the intervals about the events of the day, and told such anecdotes as would be most likely to interest the hearer—especially with regard to a case, of which the newspapers were just then full, affecting the character of some firms of good repute and long standing.

"I often think of you, my dear sir, and some shrewd remarks that fell from you about men of business—remarks which at the time I could hardly assent to, but which really every day seems to confirm. I suppose it requires experience like yours to prevent one's taking for granted that some people could not possibly deceive you. In my profession we are not apt to be too confiding; but even *I* should have thought such names as these, and others of the same order—Sir Jesse Strahan, for instance—would have been sufficient security. I confess, when you expressed a contrary opinion, I did think you a little severe."

"What has altered your opinion, then?" asked the old man, abruptly.

"Well, the fact is, sir, that a friend of mine, who is a great believer in Strahan and Co., was proposing to embark nearly all his capital in one of their speculations. I could not help recollecting your hints, and wishing he could have had the advantage of consulting you beforehand."

"It is too late for that now, Mr. Plummer. I have neither head nor heart to give advice on matters of business. My time is nearly run out; I have only one or two accounts to make up, and then the day's work will be over."

"And you can tell me nothing to benefit my friend? It might be doing a great service to the father of a family if he were warned in time."

"Aye, aye, it might, no doubt—and the old man might be prosecuted for libel. The fact of its being true wouldn't shield me, I imagine."

"As to that, sir, I do not know what would shield a solicitor who

made such use of anything said to him in private. But I will not trespass on your time by these questions when you are thinking of your own affairs. You were going to show me ——"

"I will show you more than that if you will take this key and unlock that chest. It goes smoothly enough now that dear young man has put it to rights. There," as Mr. Plummer, with zeal quickened by curiosity, lifted the heavy lid, "you see a red leather portfolio; bring it here. Thank you. I must trust some one, and I would rather do it as a matter of business than of sentiment. Your profession, as you say, is the best guarantee for your good faith. I am not going to employ you on reduced terms, sir, please to remember. I have enough to pay all that is due, and I know what is due in such cases as well as most people. There are securities here that will cover all expenses, and leave something over, thank God! so that I can show *I* never forgot, though all the world may have forgotten. And that reminds me—can you tell me what has become of those diamonds of Mrs. Salisbury's?"

"How can I tell you more, my dear sir, than is generally reported? One person in particular has been suspected, I hear, but only as a confederate. No young woman could have been the principal in such an artful robbery."

"Ah, poor Grace Pyne! My brave, honest, hard-working girl! I was afraid some mischief was hanging over her. I said so, and did what I could to give her warning; but young people will not heed in time, and find it out too late. I am too old and feeble to go and look for her and tell her she has still one friend who would answer for her honesty—aye, if a dozen people swore on the other side. She is in bad hands, I fear, but her own are as clean as an innocent child's. Aye, sir, if I can be severe on guilt that makes a fair show, do you think I can't see innocence, when it has been under my very eyes, day after day, in the midst of temptation and trial, such as poor young creatures are exposed to in this city of ours? I'd give ten pounds to anyone who would bring her to me for ten minutes—ten pounds down, as sure as I am a living man, and soon to be a dying one!"

The fervour of his manner moved even the cold-blooded nature of the man who heard him.

"Mr. Martin," he said, gravely, "this is a serious matter, and if I am to do anything in it you must trust me entirely. My profession certainly secures my fidelity; but confidence will enable me to feel with and for you, and the work will then be twice as easy. You have mentioned two distinct things almost in a breath. Will you allow me to see how they are connected?"

"I will. But before we begin, you will oblige me by taking this."

He handed the surprised lawyer two sovereigns and two shillings.

"No offence intended; or taken, I hope. It is only a form, as a matter of business. Your accepting it will be a sign that you under-

take what I require, and that I may rely on your professional services and zeal."

Mr. Plummer bowed, smiled, and waved his hands deprecatingly: but pocketed the fee with indescribable satisfaction.

"Now then, sir, having settled that point, take this statement, which I drew up some years ago, when I thought I was near my end," said the old man. "I have never shown it to any living soul. Read it carefully, and then tell me what you think."

It was about a couple of hours later when the lawyer descended the staircase: stood for a moment at the doorway, considering where to go first. In a moment a discovery flashed upon him that sent the blood from his cheeks at first with terror, and back again with rage. That figure, stealing away into the shadow, was one he knew too well; it was that of a professional spy. There could be no doubt who had sent the spy there. Sir Jesse distrusted, and was watching him: and his next step would be to work his ruin.

"It is war to the knife, then, between us," thought the lawyer. "The question now must be, which will strike the first blow."

(To be continued.)

CORAL REEFS.

In shining silks and delicate lace,
The lady is fair to see;
The haughty grace of her form and face
Is wondrous bright to me;
But the heart below beats to and fro—
As hollow as heart can be.

With faultless art, o'er her brilliant eyes,
She droops the lashes low,
Lest their cruel light should warn aright
Of the rosy reefs below—
Of the treacherous reefs below;
Where many I ween have shipwrecked been,
In the days of long ago!

The beautiful, balmy long ago,
When I put my hopes to sea.
Ah! the tide flowed high and the tide flowed low,
And the reefs were bright with their brightest glow,
But my hopes went down at sea!
O'er their shining track, some ships come back,
But mine come never to me,
Ah! woe,
They can never come back to me!

SUMMONED TO SAVE.

IN a quiet street in one of those sedate, old-fashioned quarters of Paris, which have somehow escaped the touch of Baron Haussmann's transforming wand, there stood, some ten years ago, the shop of one Narcisse Chapelain, hairdresser, or—to give M. Chapelain his full style and title, as announced to the world on the sign over the windows—"Artistic Coiffeur, Hair-merchant, and Perruquier."

Monsieur Chapelain's establishment, like the quarter in which it stood, was sedate and old-fashioned, with little in its appearance to indicate that its proprietor was one of the most fashionable and exclusive coiffeurs in Paris, an artist for whose services duchesses contended, and who waited on his "clients" at their residences in his own neat coupé.

One sunny afternoon in early Spring, when the whirl and gaiety of the Parisian season were at their height, a coronetted carriage drew up at the hairdresser's door, and a young English lady—a graceful, aristocratic-looking girl of one or two and twenty—alighted and entered the shop. The master was engaged at the moment; but one of the assistants came forward as she appeared, and after a few low-spoken words, ushered her into an inner room—a little nest of gilding and mirrors—placed a chair, and vanished.

Lady Gertrude Vansittart put back her veil, disclosing a delicate oval face with features of purest outline, a complexion like a cream-white rose, and soft serious blue eyes shaded by dark lashes. Her hair, of which only a narrow line was visible beneath her bonnet, was of a rare and most lovely shade of tawny-gold; bright as sunshine, soft as silk, and rippled like that of Titian's Fornarina.

Lady Gertrude had time to look at every print in the illustrated papers on the table, before Monsieur Chapelain appeared, profuse in apologies for having kept her waiting. He was a little, spare, withered man, close-shaven, exquisitely dressed and artfully wigged, who might have been of any age from forty to sixty, and of any rank from a marquis to a dancing-master.

"I have heard with profound regret," he said, as he advanced with a bow, "that since Mademoiselle last favoured me with a visit she has been seriously ill. May I be permitted to offer congratulations on her recovery, before inquiring in what I can have the honour of serving her to-day?"

"I will leave you to guess what service I require of you when I have taken off my bonnet, Monsieur Chapelain," his visitor replied. The bonnet was no sooner removed than he clasped his hands with a tragic exclamation of dismay. "Ciel! quel malheur! Mademoiselle's hair, of which she had such superb abundance! that exquisite —that matchless chevelure dorée!"

"Not 'matchless' in the literal sense of the word, I trust," said Lady Gertrude, interrupting his lamentations with a smile, "or I shall be disappointed in the object of my visit. I have not lost it all, as you see, though the fever has thinned it terribly," she continued, removing her comb; "and if you can procure me a plait, or a few curls, to add to it, I think the deficiency will hardly be perceived."

"It is a most fortunate chance that you should have applied to me just now, Mademoiselle," returned the hairdresser. "A few weeks earlier, or later, I might have had to look half over France for what you require, hair of that shade being so rare. As it is, I happen to have it, literally, within reach of my hand."

Opening one of a set of drawers which lined one side of the room, he took out a cardboard box, and, removing some folds of tissue-paper, drew out the contents. Lady Gertrude uttered an exclamation of delighted surprise as he displayed a long thick tress of hair, so exactly like her own in colour and texture, that when the two were mingled it was hardly possible to distinguish the real from the false.

"Mademoiselle herself can scarcely tell which is her own," said M. Chapelain, triumphantly, as he adroitly twisted a lock of each into a coil, and wound it round her head.

"It is indeed a wonderful match," assented Lady Gertrude as she turned from the mirror, "though this hair is, I think, brighter and softer than mine. It is lovely! The wonder is, how any woman could bring herself to part with it. Would it be an indiscretion to ask from whom you bought it?"

"Not at all, Mademoiselle. I will tell you with pleasure how it came into my hands; it is quite a romantic story. About a month ago, when one of my agents was in Normandy, making purchases, he found himself one day at the little out-of-the-way country town of St. Médor. After transacting the business which had brought him there, he discovered that he had an hour to spare before the diligence started, and strolled into the quaint old church overlooking the market-place. It was market-day, and the church was dotted with peasant women, who came in to say a prayer or two before they trudged home with their empty baskets and great red umbrellas. At one of the side-altars, in a dark and solitary corner, a young peasant girl was kneeling alone. Her face was turned from him, but a large golden curl had escaped from beneath her coiffe, and hung almost to her waist. It looked, he declared, 'like sunbeams meshed in silk,' and he said to himself, as he told me afterwards, 'I must have that hair, if I pay its weight in gold.' The girl was humbly clad, but there was something refined and delicate in her appearance; and when he approached so that he could see her face, he was struck by its beauty no less than by its look of grief. The tears were streaming from her eyes, her hands were clasped in an agony of supplication, and her lips moved in silent prayer. Feeling that he had no right to watch her,

he left the church, and waited in the porch outside. Presently she came out, made her way across the crowded market-place, pausing wistfully at several stalls, but buying nothing, and turned into a narrow street. Then he ventured to accost her. At first she was startled, and seemed hardly to comprehend him; but when she understood his proposal, and heard the terms he offered, her face suddenly lighted up with a look of joyful astonishment. She accepted his offer almost rapturously, and led the way to a little shop kept by an acquaintance of hers, close at hand, where the bargain was concluded. Half an hour afterwards my agent left the town, and the following week the hair was in my hands."

"And is that all you know of her?" asked the young lady, in a tone of disappointment. "Did he not even tell you her name?"

"Mais, oui; it was Gabrielle—Gabrielle—la! I have forgotten it."

"Poor girl—poor child," murmured Lady Gertrude, thoughtfully drawing one of the long silken locks through her fingers. "I wish I knew more about her, I might assist her perhaps. She must have been hard pressed by poverty to part with this."

"No doubt she is quite as well without it," remarked the hairdresser philosophically, as he refreshed himself with a pinch of snuff. "Beauty, to persons in her condition, is a superfluity."

"But Nature is an arrant democrat, you see," returned Lady Gertrude, coming out of her reverie with a smile, "and bestows her gifts impartially on peasants and peeresses. As I shall want the hair this evening, I will take it with me," she added, rising. "You will let me know, shortly, what I am indebted to you," and before Monsieur Chapelain recovered the perpendicular after his parting bow, his visitor had disappeared.

Two hours later, Lady Gertrude was sitting enthroned before her looking-glass, under the hands of her maid, whose fingers were busy with her hair; while on the dressing-table stood the cardboard box, the contents of which had not yet been called into service.

Presently she opened it and took out the hair; and with an absent, thoughtful look, began smoothing and caressing the long shining locks, which still retained their natural curl, and twined round her fingers like living things.

Her mind dwelt, with a persistency almost painful, on the thought of this unknown girl, whose beauty had been, as it were, sacrificed to her own; against her will she seemed forced to think of her, to try to picture her fair face, to conjecture her sorrowful story.

> "Had she a father,
> Had she a mother? . . . .
> Or was there a nearer one
> Yet, than all other?"

—someone who had loved to caress these soft perfumed tresses? The thought called up in Lady Gertrude's mind certain memories of

her own which brought the rose-colour to her cheeks and a happy light to her eyes. Her heart expanded with thankfulness as she thought how rich she was in everything which makes life desirable to a woman; youth, beauty, wealth, love—all were hers. She longed to give out of the bountiful stores of her own happiness to all who needed, and to her tender nature it seemed that this unknown girl had a special claim upon her.

At length her reverie was interrupted by her maid. "I am ready for the hair now, if you please, Lady Gertrude."

Her mistress handed it to her, and watched with some interest the reflection of her busy fingers while she dexterously pinned it on, and brought a thick coronet towards the front.

"There will be enough for two or three thick plaits"—the maid was beginning; when she broke off with a cry of alarm, as her mistress, with a sudden violent shudder, sank back in the chair, her face as white as her dressing-gown.

"What is it, my lady? You are faint!"

"Not faint—exactly," she answered slowly, passing her hand over her forehead. "It is—I hardly know how to describe it—a sudden chill, as if a breath of cold air had passed over me." She shivered again as she spoke.

"I will fetch a glass of wine," the maid said, hastily leaving the room.

Gertrude pressed her hand to her eyes, and drew a deep breath. The sensation of cold was gone, but it had left behind it a vague uneasiness; a curious sense of oppression, mental and bodily, which she tried in vain to shake off.

"What has come to me? am I bewitched?" she muttered, with a half-nervous laugh, as she moistened her hands and temples with eau-de-cologne. Then, resting her elbow on the dressing-table and supporting her chin on her hand, she fell to looking absently at her own reflection in the mirror—the fair pale face with its borrowed crown of sun-bright hair.

Suddenly the same thrilling sensation of cold crept over her again, and then—what was it that brought that frozen look of terror to her eyes? It was no longer her own face which the glass reflected.

The face which looked back at her now was that of a stranger; a girl of seventeen, with delicate wasted features, and dark grey-blue eyes. She wore the high white coiffe of the Normandy peasant women, and on the forehead rested a short curled fringe of tawny-golden hair. The face was of a waxen pallor; the lips were set and rigid; every feature had the seal of death upon it except the eyes, and they were fixed on Gertrude's with a look which held her spell-bound a look of dumb, agonized entreaty.

Only for one breathless moment did the vision last, then the glass gave back her own terrified face once more.

With a stifled cry she rose and hurried across the room to the

window, which looked out on the Rue de Rivoli. She threw it open, and sank into a chair, lifting her forehead to the breeze. In the street below all was life and movement: carriages whirling to and fro, equestrians returning from the Bois, a band playing in the Tuileries Gardens opposite: the gay, careless round of Parisian life going on as usual. This glimpse of the familiar out-of-door world, in all its vivid reality, went far to dispel the supernatural fear which had taken possession of her, and she half succeeded in persuading herself that the startling vision had been conjured up by her own imagination.

"It was an ocular illusion," she thought; "I had just been trying to picture this girl, and I succeeded so well as to deceive even myself." A feeling of nervous uneasiness still clung to her, however, and she was glad when the maid reappeared.

"I am much better now," she returned, in answer to the latter's inquiries. "Make haste and finish; I shall be late for dinner."

In the meantime, two gentlemen were awaiting her in the drawing-room below. Her father, the Earl of Hawdon (her only surviving parent), and her fiancé, Sir Frederick Carew. The former, after consulting his watch for the fifth time in as many minutes, turned with despairing resignation to his companion.

"Patience, my dear Frederick, is a virtue which never rusts from disuse so long as a man is blest with a single specimen of womankind."

Sir Frederick laughed. "Here she is at last," he said.

Lady Gertrude was dressed for the reception at the Embassy, to which they were bound after dinner; her first appearance in society since her illness. Her dress was beautiful. Something white and silvery gleamed through something white and cloudy; here and there nestled a spray of stephanotis; the same flower clung in the folds of her hair, which was coiled round her head and twisted into a superb golden coronet above her forehead.

"Dare I touch you?" questioned Sir Frederick, stopping at arm's-length from her. "Are you real? there is a visionary look about you to-night suggestive of mist and moonlight. Your hair is a triumph! How could you tell me, Gertrude, that you had lost it all?"

"I did not say 'all,'" she replied, turning her head aside with a slightly embarrassed smile, and glancing at her father, who was regarding her elaborate coiffure through his eyeglass with a look of affected stupefaction.

"But while you are admiring my hair, papa is starving. Come," she added, taking Sir Frederick's proffered arm; and they passed into the dining-room.

Society was lavish in its welcome that night to Lady Gertrude Vansittart, who—sitting in a fauteuil with quite a little court of friends and admirers about her, and Sir Frederick in attendance—received its compliments with an air of listlessness that was unusual to her, and to more than one speech returned a hap-hazard reply.

"I fear this is rather too much for you," Sir Frederick whispered at length. "Shall we go through the small salon into the winter-garden? It will be cool and quiet there."

"Yes," she whispered back, and rising; "let us go."

The small salon was the last of the splendid suite of rooms, and was more quietly lighted and soberly furnished than the rest. The group of persons now assembled in it seemed to harmonize with the subdued surroundings.

A few clever-looking, plainly-dressed women, and thoughtful, large-browed men, were gathered round an ottoman in the centre of the room, where sat a sprightly little elderly lady with white hair and black bead-like eyes, sparkling with animation. She was talking rapidly and vivaciously in French, pausing now and then to speak in German to a heavy-bearded, uncouth-looking personage at her side.

As Gertrude and her companion entered, the vivacious little lady broke off with an exclamation of pleasure.

"Now!" she cried, "here comes an ally!" taking Gertrude's hands with effusion. "Ma toute belle, I am always delighted to see you, as you know; but I am particularly charmed at this moment, when you come to save me from ignominious defeat. You have seen Marie Duflos, the clairvoyante, of whom all the town is talking. You have attended her séances. Very good. Now, my child, do convince these good people that one may be a believer in clairvoyance and yet not be an absolute fool."

"But, Duchesse, I am not sure that I am a believer myself," she answered, smiling; "and in any case, you surely do not need my feeble support in the presence of so distinguished an ally as Professor Hartmann?"

"But the man doesn't speak a word of French, my dear," said the Duchesse de St. Amand, dropping her voice, "and when I translate what he says, somehow it sounds foolish."

Sir Frederick, a sceptic, laughed. "No doubt it does."

Professor Hartmann, who had been regarding Gertrude attentively, now addressed her in German, with a little bow.

"The gracious lady is a believer in what is called clear-sight?"

"I hardly know; I think I am inclined to believe," she answered.

"You have it in your power to convince yourself."

"What!" she returned quickly; "do you mean that I am—I hardly know how to express it—a good subject for mesmerism?"

"Never have I a better seen!"—waving his hands descriptively towards her face and figure. "One sees at a glance that here the spiritual predominates over the material; the soul's habitation is here; and if——"

"The Herr Professor will pardon me, I am sure," Sir Frederick interposed, irreverently cutting short his dissertation, "when I say that Lady Gertrude is suffering from faintness, and is in need of fresh air;" and with a comprehensive bow to the company, he lifted

the heavy velvet portière, and passed through into the conservatory.

"That moon-struck old German would be irritating if he were not so supremely ridiculous," he said, as the heavy draperies fell behind them.

"Poor Dr. Hartmann!" returned Gertrude. "And yet he is a savant of European reputation."

They sat down in a little nook sheltered by a group of tropical plants; near it, a miniature fountain tossed up its tiny cloud of spray, the silver trickle of the water, as it dripped into the marble basin, falling pleasantly on the silence. Opposite was a tall mirror, reaching to the ground. Gertrude glanced at the mirror, and studiously averted her eyes from it.

He disengaged the fan from her wrist, and leaning forward, with his elbow on his knee, fanned gently her downcast face, which wore an expression of dreamy thoughtfulness.

"After all," she said at last, as if pursuing aloud a train of thought, "what was there so absurd in Professor Hartmann's idea? It may be that he is right; that the fetters which keep the soul captive are, with me, unusually light, and that my spirit may perceive changes and currents unfelt by others, in that mysterious outer-atmosphere which surrounds the world of the senses."

"My dear Gertrude," said her companion, laughing, "excuse me, but do you know that you are talking nonsense worthy of the illustrious Professor himself? What is it that makes you so dreamy and distraite? I have noticed it all the evening. Won't you tell me what it is?"

She hesitated. "If I did, you would laugh at me, I know," she replied with a half-nervous smile. "But perhaps it will do me good to be laughed at; I think I will tell you."

And without giving herself time to change her mind, she told him in as few words as possible of the occurrence of that afternoon. Sir Frederick listened without laughing, though the corners of his lips twitched slightly under his fair moustache.

"Very strange, and startling," he said, "but not difficult to account for. The Professor would no doubt tell you that wearing this unknown girl's hair had placed you en rapport with her, and that some mesmeric sympathy had drawn her spirit to you, and enabled it to take corporeal shape before your eyes. Not belonging to the Hartmann school, I prefer to consider it merely as an ocular illusion, produced by an excited imagination acting on an enfeebled body."

"But if you knew how like reality the illusion was! I can see her face now; that look of passionate entreaty haunts me like a reproach. However, I will think no more of it," she broke off; "it is an 'uncanny' subject. I feel quite out of tune for society to-night. I wonder whether the carriage is come? if so I should like to go home."

"I will inquire," he answered, rising.

"Are you going to leave me?" she asked, nervously.

"My dear, I shall be back in a moment. You would rather wait here than in the crowded rooms, would you not?"

"Don't be long," she urged, looking round her with a curious shiver. He gazed at her with anxious tenderness, drew her bernouse closer about her shoulders, and left the conservatory.

As he re-entered the crowded reception-rooms he caught sight of Lord Hawdon's broad shoulders and handsome grey-haired head towering above a group of lesser satellites, and with some difficulty made his way to him through the throng.

"The carriage? Won't come for another half-hour," the Earl returned, in answer to Sir Frederick's question; "but we can easily borrow one if Gertrude is unwell. What's the matter?" The other drew him aside, and in a few hasty words repeated the substance of what she had just told him, not attempting to disguise the anxiety he felt on her account. But the Earl, after a moment's stare of bewilderment, broke into a hearty laugh.

"Visions—apparitions? moonshine and fiddle-strings! I'll tell you what, Fred, when we go back we'll take her down to Brighton for a few days; the sea-breezes will soon blow all the visions away. Go and fetch her; I'll borrow Lady Dorrimore's carriage."

Sir Frederick hastened back to the conservatory. Gertrude had risen, and was standing opposite the mirror, into which she appeared to be looking intently. Struck with a vague alarm he hurried up to her.

She was leaning a little forward, her hands, folded over the chest, unconsciously grasping her cloak; her eyes fixed with a fascinated stare on the glass before her. Every drop of blood had forsaken her face; every trace of expression had vanished; it seemed no longer a living face, but a white wax mask with speechless parted lips and staring eyes—blank, fixed, vacant, like the eyes of a sleep-walker.

For a moment he stood motionless—petrified by the terrible sight, then, calling her loudly by her name, threw his arms round her and tried to draw her away; he was just in time, for, even as he touched her, the fixed eyes closed, the rigid figure collapsed, and without a word or a sigh she fell back, unconscious, on his breast.

His call for assistance brought help: the Duchesse, Lord Hawdon, and Dr. Hartmann, by whose directions Gertrude was placed on a sofa, in a current of air. Five—ten minutes passed away; she still lay unconscious. The German bent over her with a puzzled frown; felt her pulse, bent his ear to her heart, gently pushed up her eyelids, and looked at the eyes beneath. "Ach Himmel!" he said at last, "what does this mean? what has happened to this so-beautiful child?" turning on Sir Frederick with an abruptness that made him start.

"I do not know what made her faint."

"Faint? soh!" the other ejaculated contemptuously; "this is not faintness, it is trance. I know the signs; they are not to be

mistaken. It is only a body that lies here; the spirit is away. Where? She will tell you when she returns."

With a muttered exclamation of impatience Lord Hawdon put the learned Teuton aside, and folding his strong arms round his daughter's figure, raised her from the sofa.

"Carew, I shall take her home. Send someone for Doctor Lachaud. For heaven's sake make haste." And carrying her as easily as if she had been a child, he bore her to the carriage. A quarter of an hour later the first physician in Paris was at her bedside.

In the hours of suspense and anxiety that followed, every expedient that science and intelligence could suggest was tried—in vain; not a shadow of change was perceptible in her condition; her body lay where they had placed it—the limbs inert, the face white and still.

"Everything that can be done has been done," said the physician when midnight was long past. "Now we can only watch and wait."

The attendants withdrew. The Earl sat at the dressing-table, his head resting on his hand. Dr. Lachaud slowly paced the room, pausing now and then to glance at his patient. Sir Frederick, who had been admitted to the chamber, sat at the bedside, his eyes dwelling with anxious intensity on the pallid, inanimate face on the pillow.

The shaded lamps paled at last, and over the grey eastern sky there crept the rosy flush of dawn.

Was it fancy, Frederick Carew asked himself; or was there not also in the stiff face before him a glimmer of dawn—the dawn of returning consciousness?

The hope had scarcely flashed through his mind when it was transformed to certainty. He saw the set features relax; life and colour ebbed back to the skin; the lips parted; the head slightly turned on the pillow; then, with a long sigh, the lovely eyes unclosed and looked into his own.

She lay, propped up with pillows as they had raised her, looking dreamily from one to the other of the anxious faces at her bedside. Gradually, a light of recollection and intelligence dawned in her eyes; but, as it brightened, her face grew troubled, and the faint colour, which had crept to her cheek on waking, faded again, leaving it whiter than before.

"Papa, I wish to be alone with you and Frederick. I have something to say to you."

"Not now, Gertrude; another time."

"I must tell you at once, without a moment's delay," she answered, in an agitated voice. Dr. Lachaud nodded slightly, and left the room.

When the door was shut she turned to them with indescribable solemnity and earnestness. "A wonderful thing has happened to me," she began; "a thing so strange that I hardly know in what words to describe it. Frederick," she continued, "have you repeated to

papa what I told you last night—was it last night?—in the conservatory at the Embassy?"

Sir Frederick replied in the affirmative.

"Then I need not preface what I am going to relate by any explanations. When you were about to leave me to go in search of the carriage, you noticed that I shivered, as if with cold? At that moment there was creeping over me the same deadly chill I had felt a few hours before, accompanied by the same vague dread. I was afraid to remain alone, and rose, intending to follow you, but as I did so, my eyes, which I had hitherto averted from the glass, were drawn to it in spite of me, as if by magnetic attraction, and held spell-bound. There, once more, was the vision; the eyes were fixed on mine in dumb entreaty, a hundred times more urgent, more agonized than before. I felt that she appealed to me to save her from some terrible impending calamity which I alone could avert, and I thrilled in every nerve with the sense of an unintelligible responsibility. Suddenly I felt that she called me. I heard no voice; my name was not pronounced, but I was called; her spirit imperiously summoned mine, which heard the summons and strove to obey; it seemed drawn from me—struggling to get free. There followed a moment of agony not to be told; then some impalpable link snapped, and there was a blank. How long that interval of oblivion lasted I cannot tell. I awoke—if it can be called awakening—in the scene I am about to describe. I saw a small antique chamber, with stone floor and arched ceiling, lighted by one narrow window deep-set in the massive wall. The humble furniture was modern, and consisted only of a little curtainless bed, a wooden chair, and an old chest, used as a table. It was night; a pale moombeam streamed through the window, and mingled its light with that of two tall wax tapers which stood at the bed's head. On the chair, which was drawn close to the fireless hearth, sat an old woman in a black stuff skirt and white coiffe, rocking herself monotonously to and fro; a noble dog of the Norman breed crouched at her side with its head in her lap. At the foot of the bed knelt a young man in the dress of a French peasant farmer, with a handsome sunburnt face and dark eyes and hair. His hands, tightly clasped, were outstretched on the bed; his eyes were fixed with a look of passionate love and hopeless grief on the figure which lay there—the figure of a young girl whom I at once recognized as the golden-haired girl of my vision. The pallor of death was on her features, and the dreadful stillness of death in her composed attitude. Her eyes were closed, and instead of that look of fear and agony, the sweet face wore an expression of profound and most pathetic peace. She was dressed in white from head to foot, like a bride, but instead of orange-blossoms, a wreath of immortelles, the flowers of the dead, lay on her bosom, and a crucifix was placed upon the folded hands. As I saw her lying thus, dressed for the grave, a fear and horror such as I have no words to describe over

powered me, for there flashed upon me, like an inspiration from heaven, the conviction that a fatal mistake had been made. *What seemed death was but trance.* Now I understood the agonized entreaty of those haunting eyes; now I knew why I had been summoned. I struggled desperately to make my presence known, to break the spell that held me, and utter a word of warning. In vain. At that very moment the vision faded, and after another interval of oblivion I woke to find myself here."

When Gertrude ceased there was silence. Lord Hawdon and Sir Frederick looked at each other, but neither seemed inclined to speak. At length the latter said hesitatingly, "It was a strange dream."

"A 'dream'!" she echoed, looking up at him. "Do you suppose that what I have described to you was a mere dream?"

"What do you consider it yourself?" he asked.

"I believe it was a revelation granted me for a special purpose," she answered, solemnly; "that of saving a fellow-creature from a fate so ghastly that it turns one cold to think of it. To be buried alive —oh, horrible!"

She covered her eyes, shuddering from head to foot.

"But good heavens, Gertrude, you surely don't believe ——" the Earl was beginning, but she did not hear him.

"How am I to save her? what can I do?" she continued. "If I knew her name I might telegraph to her friends, but as it is ——" she paused a moment, deep in thought. "I must go to the place where she lives—St. Médor. If I start to-day—at once, I may be in time. Papa, you will take me," she pleaded, looking imploringly into his face. "Oh, do not refuse! think what is at stake!"

"But, Gertrude, consider what you ask," remonstrated Sir Frederick. "How can you rush off into the wilds of Normandy after a girl whose very name you do not know, and who ——"

"Once at St. Médor we should soon find out her name," she interrupted. "I can describe her exactly. Oh, Frederick, for heaven's sake don't throw obstacles in the way; use your influence with papa, beg him to take me. If he will not," she added, raising herself, while her eyes glittered feverishly, "I declare that I will go alone, this very hour."

Her father looked at her in helpless perplexity. Sir Frederick, seeing it was useless to argue with her, drew him into the next room, where the physician was waiting. There was a hurried argument and consultation between the three, which ended in the doctor's saying:

"I am disposed to agree with Sir Frederick. It will be less injurious to Mademoiselle in the present state of her nerves to yield to this fancy than to oppose it."

Upon that, Lord Hawdon, finding himself in a minority, gave way under protest. Time-tables were at once consulted, the preparations for the hurried journey were begun, and in little more than an hour

afterwards Gertrude, with her father and Sir Frederick, was on her way to the railway station.

The first freshness of the early morning was still in the air when the three travellers saw Paris, with its crowded roofs and spires, receding behind them as they were borne swiftly onwards towards sunny Normandy.

II.

The quaint, picturesque little town of St. Médor nestles at the snuggest end of a wooded valley, through which a stream runs brawling and foaming over its rocky bed. The railway, disdaining to turn out of its path for so insignificant a dot on the map of France, darts past the opposite end of the valley, to the satisfaction of some of the St. Médoriens, and the disgust of others. The only inn of any pretensions in the place is the "Lion d'Or," a rambling, whitewashed building, which takes up a large slice of the main street, and "pretends" to comfort rather than style, the front door opening point-blank, without any compromise, on the kitchen, through which visitors of every degree have to pass to reach their rooms.

The landlord—a stout, bald man, with a grave, responsible bearing and a solemn fat face—came forward with empressement as they alighted, and ushered them into the salle-à-manger, with a gesture which placed himself, his house, and all his belongings at their disposal. But he was transfixed in the middle of his very best bow by the information that, for the present, at least, the travellers required nothing of the "Golden Lion" but a certain piece of information, with which no doubt it could furnish them.

"What was it Monsieur desired to know?" emphatically demanded Madame—a vivacious little brunette—putting her husband aside like one well accustomed to take the reins of government into her own plump hands.

Sir Frederick repeated his question.

"A golden-haired girl named Gabrielle?" she echoed, opening her black eyes to their widest. "Monsieur must mean Gabrielle Desanges. But yes, certainly, we know her well; everyone in the place knows her—knew her, I should say, for hélas! la pauvre enfant is dead. She died two days ago. Ah, ciel!" she broke off, "Mademoiselle is ill—Mademoiselle is about to faint."

But Gertrude did not faint, though she turned deadly white.

"Is she—have they—buried her?" Her lips would hardly frame the words.

"Not yet, mademoiselle; the funeral will take place this afternoon, at half-past four or five o'clock," the landlady answered, glancing at the time-piece, which pointed to four. "It is late, but Monsieur le Curé was engaged this morning. She is to be buried in the grave-

yard of the old chapel of Chandoré; they wished her to be laid there because it is close to the farm."

"Then she did not live in the town?" questioned Sir Frederick.

"No, monsieur, she lived with her aunt and cousin, the Lefêvres, at the Château-Farm at Chandoré away in the woods, five or six miles from here. The farm stands on the ruins of the old château, Monsieur understands. The poor child was to have been married this month to her cousin Etienne. I went to the farm early this morning to see her in her coffin. They had arranged the old room in the tower, which used to be her bedroom, as a chapelle ardente. There she lay, the dear little love, in her bridal dress, with such an angelic look on her face, one could hardly believe she was dead; she seemed in a happy dream."

Gertrude hastily rose, and asked what conveyance there was for hire in the town which would take them to Chandoré.

"I fear there is not a carriage to be had this afternoon, Mademoiselle; they are all gone to the fête at Vitreau."

"There is the chaise," suggested a voice in the background.

"And the horse, imbécile?" snapped Madame. "Have we not lent Pomponette to Pierre Martin? Stay," she broke off, "he must have returned by this time: Jean-Marie, mon fils, run and tell him to bring the mare and carriole round this minute."

As the boy disappeared on his mission, she continued, with a curiosity not to be any longer suppressed. "Mademoiselle and the gentlemen came to St. Médor on purpose to see Gabrielle?"

"Yes, we have heard of her, and wished to see her," Gertrude answered, readily. "Had she been ill long?"

"About three weeks; it was a fever which she took in nursing Etienne. Etienne Lefêvre, Mademoiselle must know, is the owner of the Château Farm, which has been in his family for generations; his widowed mother lives with him. Gabrielle, the orphan child of the sister of Madame Lefêvre, was adopted by the latter years ago, and has lived at the château ever since. The farm is a triste place, and the Lefêvres have always been poor, but as proud, in their way, as the old race of the Chandorés. They have never been very popular, but always respected, and none more so than Etienne, who, for all his pride and reserve, has as good a heart as ever beat. As for Gabrielle, she had no pride—not a scrap; but she was as shy as a little bird, and it was only on Sundays, when she came to Mass, that we at St. Médor caught sight of her sweet face and lovely golden hair. But everyone knew that she was betrothed to her cousin, and one look at their faces when they were together would tell you it was a love match. Some folks used to pity the girl, shut up in the lonely old château; but it was not lonely for her, it held all she loved on earth, and I believe the old roof never covered a happier creature than she was, until about six weeks ago. Then fever broke out at Chandoré, and

among the first to be struck down was Etienne. For days he was delirious, and when at last the fever passed, it left him weaker than a child. Still the doctor gave them hope that, with careful nursing, he might struggle back to health, but he must have generous diet; broth, wine, and so on. Hélas! what were they to do? Every sou was already spent, their neighbours were as poor as themselves, and as I have said, they had but few friends. Well, one day, Gabrielle walked all the way here, in order to pray at the shrine of our Lady. If ever a passionate prayer went up to heaven, it was from her heart that day, and it was answered—wonderfully answered. As she left the church a strange gentleman followed and spoke to her. Fancy her surprise when he asked her if she would sell her hair; but fancy her joy when he offered to pay for it what seemed to her a small fortune—a sum which would enable her to give Etienne all the luxuries he needed, and keep them in comfort till he was strong again. From that day Etienne wanted for nothing, and slowly recovered. It was not till he was well enough to leave his bed that his mother told him of Gabrielle's sacrifice. When he heard it, cold, proud, reserved, as he was called, he cried like a child, stirred to the depths of his heart with love and gratitude. On that very day the cruel fever laid its hand on Gabrielle, and she took to the bed from which she was never to rise again. She lingered for several days after the fever had left her, lying in a stupor so like death that it was only by the fluttering at her heart they could tell she still lived. At length, Etienne, who was watching, saw her lips unclose; she drew a deep breath, then all was still. The poor little love was dead."

As Madame uttered the last words, and put a corner of her apron to her eyes, a rattling of wheels sounded in the stone-paved street.

"Voilà Pomponette!" she exclaimed, bustling from the room.

"If my company is not absolutely necessary on this excursion, my dear," said Lord Hawdon, mildly, speaking for the first time since they had entered the house, "I think I should prefer not to risk my neck in the conveyance I see at the door. Still, if I am required ——"

"No, no, stay where you are, papa," Gertrude answered hastily, following Sir Frederick through the kitchen.

The equipage to which Lord Hawdon had made disparaging reference was a nondescript vehicle with a battered leathern hood; attached to this machine was a tall and bony quadruped with a Roman nose, and an expression of wooden stolidity.

"Voilà Pomponette!" repeated Madame, triumphantly; "she will do the six miles in no time. Bon voyage, monsieur et madame!" And the travellers having scrambled to their seats under the nodding hood, the driver cracked his whip, and they started; the whole street turning out as one man to watch them.

Clear of the town, their way led them along the winding road which ran through the valley. Turning to the left, they then found them-

selves ascending one of the wooded slopes. The woods thickened as they proceeded, and the scene grew more solitary. For several miles they encountered no one but a little herd-boy, leading a lame cow by a rope, and passed no human habitation but the rude cabin of a sabotier, whose stock in trade of wood was piled in a stack at the side of his hut. The woods were utterly still, except when the wild-pigeon's distant note fell with a forlorn and plaintive sound on the silence. Gertrude noted nothing of the scene around her; her eyes were gazing into the distance, where her thoughts had fled before her. Once she complained of a painful feeling of suffocation.

"The air stifles me, I can hardly breathe," she panted, though the evening breeze was blowing fresh and cool in her face at the moment.

The shadows lengthened fast across the lonely forest road. It wanted only a few minutes to five o'clock when at length they came in sight of their destination. At the end of a long, wild, grass-grown avenue, branching off to the left of the road, rose all that remained of the great front gate of the château; one massive pier alone was standing, the other, together with the wall, had crumbled to decay, and the long, dry moat had been converted into a vegetable garden. Crossing the rough, wooden structure, which supplied the place of the old drawbridge, they found themselves in what had been the outer court of the château, now used as a rick-yard. In the midst stood a picturesque pile of ruins of which the only portion that seemed habitable was a mossy tower with pointed, red-tiled roof. On to the side of this had been built, with the old materials lying ready to hand, a modern farm-house: a quaint, rambling, weather-stained structure, which did no violence to its antique surroundings. No one was in sight, and the place was profoundly still, except for the melancholy howling of a dog within the house. Leaving the carriage, they crossed the court-yard to the front-door, which stood half open.

Motioning to Sir Frederick to keep back a moment, Gertrude ascended the worn stone steps and looked in. A cool, dark, spacious kitchen, its corners lost in shadow; a raftered ceiling black with smoke, a hooded chimney, and a wide stone hearth. On a low stool near the hearth, with drooping head, and hands clasped round her knees, sat an old woman, in a black serge skirt, and Normandy cap.

Gertrude Vansittart entered, and stooping over her, gently touched her shoulder. She raised her head, and then, with a sudden shock and thrill of startled recognition, Gertrude saw one of the faces of her "dream."

As the old fermière looked up at her strange visitor, at the pale beautiful face and the golden hair, which, lighted from behind by the setting sun, looked like the aureole of a pictured saint, she seemed for a moment to doubt whether it was not a celestial apparition.

Gertrude saw the unspoken thought, and answered it.

"It is not a vision," she said quickly, with a faint smile; "I am

a woman like yourself. My friend and I are come to—the funeral. Has it left the house?"

"A quarter of an hour ago," was the reply.

Gertrude wrung her hands. "Where is the churchyard? show me the way!"

The other, wondering at her excitement, and vaguely infected by it, rose slowly to her feet.

"I am too stiff with rheumatism to walk, or I should have gone myself," she said. "The nearest road is across the court at the back, through the field, and—but I fear you will never find the way. Stay! I will send the dog with you, he will follow them straight as an arrow. We were obliged to lock him up," she continued, as she passed through a doorway communicating with the old tower and ascended a short flight of stone steps to an arched, nail-studded door. "It was a strange thing, but he would not let them take the coffin; he defended it like a mad creature, and it was nearly half-an-hour before they could master him. Stand back, madame."

The caution was not unnecessary, for the moment the door was opened the great Norman hound leaped out with the rush and spring of a tiger, cleared the steps at a bound, and darted out of the house.

"N'importe; he will have to wait while you open the courtyard gate, then you can follow him," said the old woman.

Crossing the inner court of the château, which was now a picturesquely-untidy farmyard, where a cloud of pigeons rose at their approach and fluttered to the dove-cote on the roof of the old tower, they reached the gate, which the dog was vainly trying to push open. Then, traversing an orchard, white with blossom, and a field beyond, they entered a pine-wood, where the twilight shadows were gathering thickly, and emerging from this, found themselves in a little glade, set like an emerald in the green gloom of the woods. Here stood the ancient chapel and graveyard of Chandoré.

The last level rays of the setting sun streamed into the glade, and lay in long shafts of light across the humble graves. At the further side of the churchyard, a crowd of people, chiefly peasants, were gathered round an open grave into which the coffin had just been lowered; the grey-headed curé was sprinkling it with holy water, and pronouncing some words of benediction which sounded distinctly in the hushed silence.

The dog, who had paused at the gate of the churchyard, now darted across, and pushed his way through the crowd to the side of a young man who was kneeling at the edge of the grave, his face hidden in his hands, his strong frame convulsed by hushed sobs.

As Sir Frederick and Gertrude made their way towards the group every head was turned save that of the curé, who stood with his back to them.

Gertrude approached, and laid her hand on his arm. He started and turned, looking at her with grave surprise.

"Why do you interrupt the holy rites of the dead?" he questioned, almost sternly.

Her answer was given in a low but distinct tone which reached every ear. "Because I have reason to believe that you are celebrating them over the living."

A sort of thrill and tremor ran through the crowd, swelling to a confused murmur of astonishment, but on Etienne Lefèvre the words acted like a galvanic shock. Starting to his feet, his sun-burnt face blanched to a sickly pallor, he fixed his eyes on Gertrude with a wild look of mingled astonishment and incredulity.

"What do you tell me?" exclaimed the curé, in an altered voice.

"The truth, as I hope and believe," she answered firmly. "The girl who lies there is not dead but entranced."

He looked at her in doubt and perplexity. "You are a stranger here, madame; how do you know this? On what do you found your belief?"

"On what we have heard of the circumstances of the girl's illness," returned Sir Frederick, answering for her. "It is not the first time that the stupor of exhaustion has been mistaken for death."

"Oh, do not delay!" cried Gertrude, in an agony. "Open the coffin—quick! or it may be too late."

A short, sun-burnt, grey-haired gentleman stepped forward from the crowd—the country doctor who had attended Gabrielle.

"Raise the coffin and open the lid," he said, authoritatively.

The ropes used for lowering it had not yet been removed; it was soon raised, and the thin wooden lid hastily prised open. Gertrude dared not look.

It needed all the priest's authority to keep back the excited throng which pressed round as the doctor knelt and bent over the coffin. The young farmer knelt opposite him, looking up at him with dilated eyes and white speechless lips, his whole face one agonized question. There was a long moment of breathless silence, broken only by the low whine of the dog, who crouched close to the coffin. Then the doctor raised his head, and looking round, beckoned to Lady Gertrude.

"You were right!" he said. "Look here."

She sank on her knees by the coffin. For a moment there was a mist of excitement before her eyes which blinded her. Then, as it cleared away, she saw before her once more that fair face, so strange, yet so familiar, to her; the delicate wasted features, the pathetic mouth, the fringe of golden hair. There lay the girlish figure in its dress of bridal white, a wreath of immortelles resting on the little hands folded meekly over the bosom.

"Look there!" the doctor repeated, excitedly, and pointed to the temples, where a slight moisture had started and stood in beads on the skin. "There is proof that she lives."

"She lives!—she lives!" cried Etienne, hoarsely, and the next

moment he had caught the slight figure in his strong arms and strained her to his heart in a fierce rapture of love and joy; raining kisses on her face, on the closed eyes, the sweet cold lips, with sobs, and broken cries, and incoherent words of passionate tenderness.

"My bride—my wife—given back to me from the grave! My love, my angel—my Gabrielle!"

"She must be taken home at once," said the doctor, anxiously.

"I will take her," he interrupted. "No—I will have no help." And, putting aside those who would have assisted him, he clasped his light burden closer in his arms, and hurried away, the dog keeping close to his side, whining and panting with excitement, leaping up to lick the little hand that hung over the young man's shoulder, every line of his supple body eloquent of joy.

A messenger was sent on first to break the joyful news to the old fermière, and to assist in getting everything ready for Gabrielle's reception.

And so she was carried home, and laid once more in her little bed in the dim old turret-chamber.

So still and inanimate she lay, with so little look of life in the white face and nerveless figure, that at first the anxious watchers feared the rescue had come too late, and that the lamp of life had but flickered for a moment to be extinguished again for ever.

It was not till after several hours of patient unremitting efforts that they perceived any change in her condition. At length, just as twilight was fading into night, and the first rays of the young moon streamed through the narrow window, Gabrielle stirred: a tremor passed over her face like a ripple over water, her breast heaved in a long, deep inspiration, her eyelids quivered, and then slowly—slowly, the "windows of the soul" unclosed.

Etienne bent over her, hardly daring to breathe, unable to utter a word, his whole heart in his eyes. She looked at him in return with a calm abstracted gaze which expressed neither wonder nor recognition—a look of almost unearthly serenity, as if her spirit had not yet descended from "an ampler æther, a diviner air," into the atmosphere of this lower world.

He raised her, and put to her lips the restorative which the doctor handed him.

"Dost thou not know me, my sweet?" Her face changed at the sound of his voice; the dreamy far-away look passed from it like breath from a mirror; a tender tinge of rose-colour crept to her cheeks, and her lips smiled as they silently formed his name. Then her eyes wandered inquiringly round the room, and for the first time she saw Lady Gertrude, who stood a little apart. She started; her eyes dilated suddenly with a look of wonder, fear, and recognition.

"Who is that?" she breathed, trying to raise herself. With a fast-beating heart Gertrude approached the bedside.

"Who is it?" Gabrielle repeated in a breathless undertone, her eyes intently dwelling on the other's face as she bent over her and took her hand. "You are a stranger, yet I know you. Am I dreaming? Where have I seen you before? and what was the fear and horror that was upon me when ——" Her voice failed, and she closed her eyes with a shudder.

"This dear lady is a stranger to thee, and to us all, dearest," said Etienne, "though she came here on purpose to see thee."

"Shall I tell you how I first heard of you, Gabrielle?" said Gertrude, forcing herself to speak calmly, though she still trembled with the awe of that strange recognition. "Do you recognise this?" she continued, with a smile as Gabrielle looked up, passing her hand lightly over her golden coronet.

"Ah, I understand!" exclaimed Etienne; "it was you, mademoiselle, who bought our Gabrielle's golden hair, and that accounts for your wishing to see her. Surely it was an angel from heaven that led you here," he added, in an undertone.

"Then was it only in a dream that I saw you?" questioned Gabrielle, still looking at her, but now with an expression of wistful doubt, as if already the vague recollection were beginning to fade; "and the dreadful fear ——"

"Yes, it was all a troubled dream," interposed Gertrude, quickly. "You must forget it, now that you have awakened once more to love and hope and happiness."

Lady Gertrude's mission was accomplished, and her presence no longer needed; but in their gratitude they would not let her leave the château till she had given them the promise of a speedy future visit.

As she stood at the bedside, taking her farewell of Gabrielle, and thought in what a "horror of darkness" the fair young life would have ended but for her interposition, tears of thankfulness filled her eyes, and her heart went up in gratitude to heaven for permitting her to be so strangely, so mysteriously summoned to save.

THROUGH HOLLAND.

BEFORE concluding this series of papers upon Holland, I would ask the indulgent reader to accompany me upon a second visit I recently paid to that country. There were two reasons for this visit. I wished to see certain towns and places—such as Dordrecht—which I had culpably passed over in my prevous sojourn. And I desired to make the acquaintance of a Dutch friend, who had entered into an interesting correspondence with me since the appearance of the first of these papers in the January number of the ARGOSY.

Upon this occasion I crossed over by way of Harwich: leaving Liverpool Street station at eight o'clock in the evening, and reaching the pier about ten. The steamer waited long enough to get on board luggage and people, and then started.

A piece of tyranny must be recorded, and the sooner it is rectified the better. None were allowed to take any luggage into their cabin. The smallest portmanteaus, only large enough to hold a few articles for immediate use, were rigorously excluded. Everyone was complaining at this unreasonable and inconvenient regulation. The next morning, as in the confusion of tongues at the Tower of Babel, each was calling out for his sack: giving rise to a confusion only inferior in degree to that which overtook the ambitious descendants of Noah. But remonstrance was vain. When brushes and combs were wanted to repair that dilapidated and altogether woe-begone appearance, invariable result of a night on board ship, it was a difficult if not impossible task to fish out one's particular and private property from the mass of luggage on deck.

"We pass like night from land to land." In due time we entered the Maas. All the old points were there I had seen nearly a year ago. The long breakwater; the distant tower of Brielle; barges, with their brown canvas, sailing to and fro; occasional cottages with their red roofs and green shutters; groups of cattle; white birds flying about, and crowning the posts in the water, floating upon its surface, or diving out of sight after a hapless prey; and by-and-by the great canal of Schiedam, its distillery chimneys monuments of warning to those who sacrifice at this bacchanalian altar. Then, soon after, the forests of masts, the Boomptjies, the bright houses, the long rows of waving trees; a scene of life and activity; a sound as of the far-off rush and roar of a great city; and before nine o'clock we had anchored at Rotterdam.

Again I went to the Hôtel des Bains on the Boomptjies, and again found it one of the most comfortable inns in Holland. The first town I intended to visit was Dordrecht—or Dort, as it is commonly called by the Dutch. After a bath and a breakfast I sallied forth.

I had hoped to go up to Dort by water, but the eleven o'clock boat had started, and there was nothing left for it but the train. I made the best of my way to the station, in the centre of the town, immediately opposite the post-office.

More than ever, standing in the waiting-room at the great open windows, the extreme gaiety and cheerfulness, the especial brightness of Rotterdam was apparent. A scene not to be found, perhaps, out of Holland. The day was fine and sunny: an indispensable condition to the enjoyment of this Dutch country. From these windows you observed nothing but winding canals, and houses of all shapes and sizes, outlines, and heights, in every stage of antiquity. A heaping together of roofs black and red, and windows most of whose sashes are picked out with white. However barbarous this custom, undoubtedly it gives a general effect of bright and cheerful animation to the whole place. In every direction the drawbridges, with their cross and upright beams, spanned the canals, connecting all parts of the town. It must be confessed that these drawbridges are occasionally a wholesome exercise to the virtue of patience. You are perhaps driving through the town; possibly in a hurry; when just as you reach a bridge, down go the chains, up swing the beams, and your progress is arrested. And if there is one time more than another when you are inclined to accord to the Dutch their prevailing reputation of apathy and phlegmatism, it is when waiting until one of these barges has passed through the lock. Heavy, cumbrous structures, moved only by manual exertion, they travel with a deliberation irritating to anyone not gifted with the patience of Job. In a very few moments a surprising crowd gathers, and, the bridge let down again, away they rush, tumbling over each other's heels, and threatening the safety of the structure.

From the elevated windows of the waiting-room I looked down upon all this with edifying calmness. The canals this morning were full of various-coloured barges, wending their slow, deliberate course. From many a masthead long streamers fluttered in the soft north-west wind: in accompaniment as it seemed to the graceful waving and bending and rustling of the trees that lined the waterside in every direction. The breeze, at once soft and grateful, seemed almost laden with the scent of the sea. Here and there, above the roofs of the houses, the brown sails of a windmill might be observed hard at work. Towers and steeples upreared their heads. Beyond, the white fleecy clouds floated majestically in the dark blue sky, and cast their lights and shadows upon earth and water. The reader can perhaps imagine the effect of this accumulation of points and features, each and all distinct and telling: it cannot be fully realized without experience. But above all there was a tone, a warmth, a richness of colouring almost dazzling. It could only be compared to a scene in fairyland, and seemed to throw a charmed spell over the mind. It was taken in with a species of calm, dreamlike emo-

tion; the senses were lulled into a delicious, dolce far niente trance; whilst feeling its wonderful effect it was impossible to analyse in what it consisted. The reflection of the sun and the clouds and the barges upon the water, contributed not a little to the whole surrounding life and animation.

A quarter of an hour's waiting and the train came up; the doors were thrown open; the room was soon emptied of passengers.

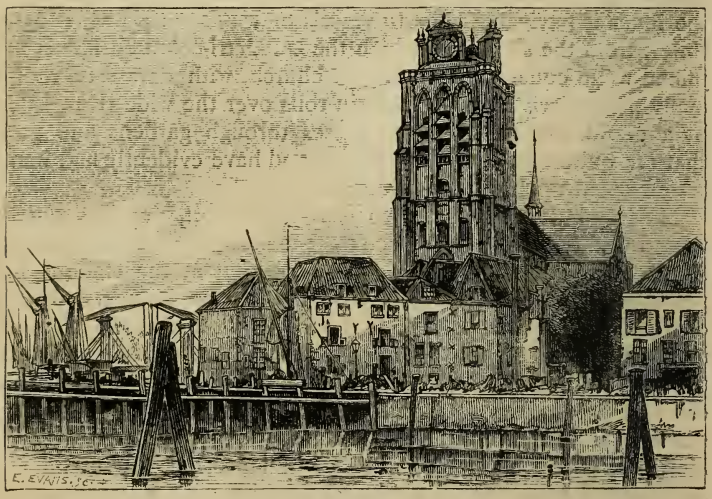
The road to Dort is of course perfectly flat on either side; diversified only by long rows of willows; and fields of corn and potatoes, and waving beans that throw a delicious scent into the air. Passing a station or two, you at length perceive in the distance a group of red roofs belonging to sundry diminutive cottages; windmills and tall factory chimneys; here and there the masts of a large ship—for the Maas is navigable here to vessels of tonnage; a fine, square old tower, from the summit of which the Dutch tri-coloured flag is flying; joined to an equally old cruciform church, with dark slate roofs and many pointed windows. The train rolls over the wide river, spanned by a grand new iron bridge; passes through gardens and grounds that are quite rural and picturesque, and have evidently had immense labour spent upon them; and stops at Dort.

Having but a few hours to devote to Dort, my first endeavour was to find an open conveyance to take me about the neighbourhood. A close fly and an omnibus were in waiting at the station; but to perambulate unknown streets in one of these shut-in concerns is only a degree better than being boxed up in a hearse. After many inquiries and some trouble, it seemed that such a thing as an open trap was to be had. A man, hanging about the station, offered to conduct me to the fortunate owner of this unique treasure. We started; and evidently the guide took a long round in the hope of increasing his fee. At last, out of patience, I came to an anchor and refused to accompany him any further: upon which he turned down a by-street, and immediately we were at the coach office. Yes; the proprietor informed me that he had a delightful open carriage at my disposal. In a very few moments it came round to the door.

In this world every man sees things from a different point of view—generally his own; we all estimate things by comparison. But each one makes his comparison for himself. Tastes and inclinations differ, happily. One man chooses the shady side of the street; another prefers the sunny. One falls into ecstacies in the presence of brown eyes, another yields to the softer and more sentimental charms of blue. The ugliest face will find a taste to consider it handsome. These are given laws, wise adaptations, without which the small amount of harmony existing in the world would soon cease. So the coach-owner thought his open carriage a splendid concern, and gazed with pride upon its symmetrical proportions.

It was a machine that ran upon two wheels—probably because it

could not run upon one. Between them was suspended a sort of black wooden box, turned upside down, resembling a fat coffin. It might have been Mahomet's coffin, only that from its weight it could never have soared so near heaven. Upon this coffin two perpendicular rails were fixed to support a narrow cross piece of wood intended for a rest, that exactly fitted into the small of the back. There was just room enough for the driver and the passenger to sit together in quarters more close than pleasant; and every time the excitable quadruped wanted pulling in, the elbow of the driver came into disagreeable contact with his neighbour's ribs. The horse quite equalled the machine in originality. Its gait was peculiar and variable. Now it went with a kind of swinging move-



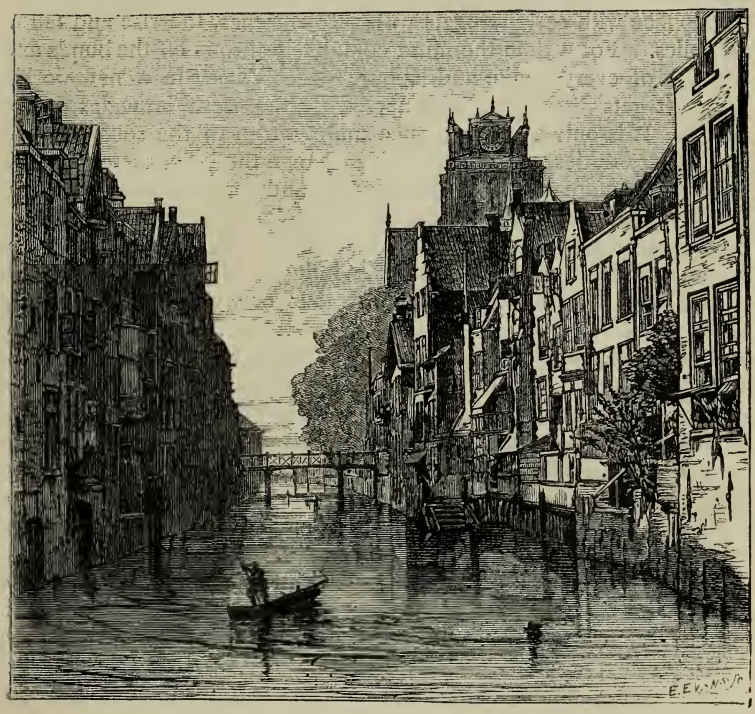
CATHEDRAL, DORT.

ment; and now jerked the vehicle as it rolled along, with a sharp, quick, up-and-down motion that brought out words with a hollow sound, and utterly disjointed phrases. A full stop became absolutely necessary every few hundred yards to recover equilibrium. The quadruped was a thin, lean animal, with stiff legs which he moved spasmodically: now all four leaving the ground at the same moment with a kind of flying leap, threatening those behind him with a somersault in the air, neither dignified nor pleasant, but perhaps clever; and then returning the legs to earth with a sudden leaden determination that nearly sent us over his head.

Into this nondescript affair I mounted. The ludicrousness of the whole thing was not lost upon me. We set off amidst the shouts of a small army of boys: demonstrations I chose to look upon as applause, but were more probably sarcasms: and I congratulated

myself upon so much personal control and the absence of all regard to public opinion.

It may at once be stated that to go to Holland and pass over Dort is the greatest possible mistake. Before visiting the Netherlands, it is well to realise at the outset our object in so doing. If it be for beauties of scenery disappointment must result. If it be to see large fine towns, full of modern palaces and fashionable life, this also will not be attained. If it be to discover art treasures, they abound, and are of many kinds. But above all, if it be to see a country, much of



DORDRECHT.

whose history lies in the past: a country that bears the impress of that past history even unto this day upon its more prominent features, we shall be fully satisfied. In other countries you may wander through town after town and find the same eternal string of streets and straight, tame houses: one town and one street resembling another. It is not so in Holland. But that most of the fronts of the streets and houses have been modernized, it would be matchless amongst the countries of Europe. The beauties of Nature cannot be over-estimated; their praises cannot be too highly sung or said; their influence, at once softening and elevating, upon man, has long been

recognised. But grand and sublime as all this is, it is nevertheless still life, and only that. Times and seasons there are when the mind craves for the evidence and influence of a more active state of existence, yet without losing sight of artistic beauty. This you get in Holland. You may read the history of a bygone people, but it will be clothed with a certain mist and dimness; past records are always enveloped in a sense of obscurity, a difficulty of realization: you cannot get hold of a full firm grasp. In Holland, on the contrary, you find records of the past so substantial that the mists of uncertainty fade away; obscurity vanishes. You stand side by side and face to face with early struggles, disastrous sieges, the rise and fall of republics. For a time the mind completely throws off the bonds and shackles of everyday life and labour; it feels itself in a new world; the spirit gets braced up and nerved for the fresh struggles of the future. It is only when you once more return to the sober routine of ordinary duties; only when you exchange the influences of such a country for more commonplace aspects and surroundings; that you realize the full benefit and pleasure of a sojourn amidst the Dutch.

This, at any rate, has been my experience. It may be that others would not prove susceptible to the influence: a condition difficult to realize. I should be sorry to colour or exaggerate facts. As far as possible I have endeavoured to moderate my own impressions, and keep them duly within bounds. It must not be forgotten that there are certain elements and influences which appeal to a particular bent or cast of mind: whilst others are universal in their powers of attraction. Everyone must be more or less impressed with a ponderous snow mountain that seems to tower into the very heavens, tipped it may be with the rosy light of sunset, or the first beams of the morning. Or with a long chain of undulating hills reaching far out of sight: as, reader, you may have seen those glorious giant Alps from the heights of Mont Perrache, stretching far down into the sunny skies of Italy, in all their beauty of atmosphere, their magnificence and repose. Or again with smiling and fertile plains, through which winding rivers flow onwards to the sea, amidst fair pastures, and glens rich in wild flowers and delicate ferns; where, perchance, at the midnight hour, fairies trip upon the greensward to the light of a silver bow and the dance-music of the nightingales. Or with such a view —more homely, indeed, but beautiful in its way as snow-capped mountains—as you get from the Wynd Cliff: an almost impossible assemblage of seas and rivers, far-off outlines of coast country, and nearer rocks and cliffs guarding a matchless stream; fields, plains, and ruins: in fact almost every imaginable feature that Nature possesses. These are influences everyone must yield to; but they are not those of Holland. In the one instance you are face to face with Creation, and the mind insensibly takes its highest flights of thought and emotion: in the other you come down to the level of human nature in its best aspect, which also finds its answering

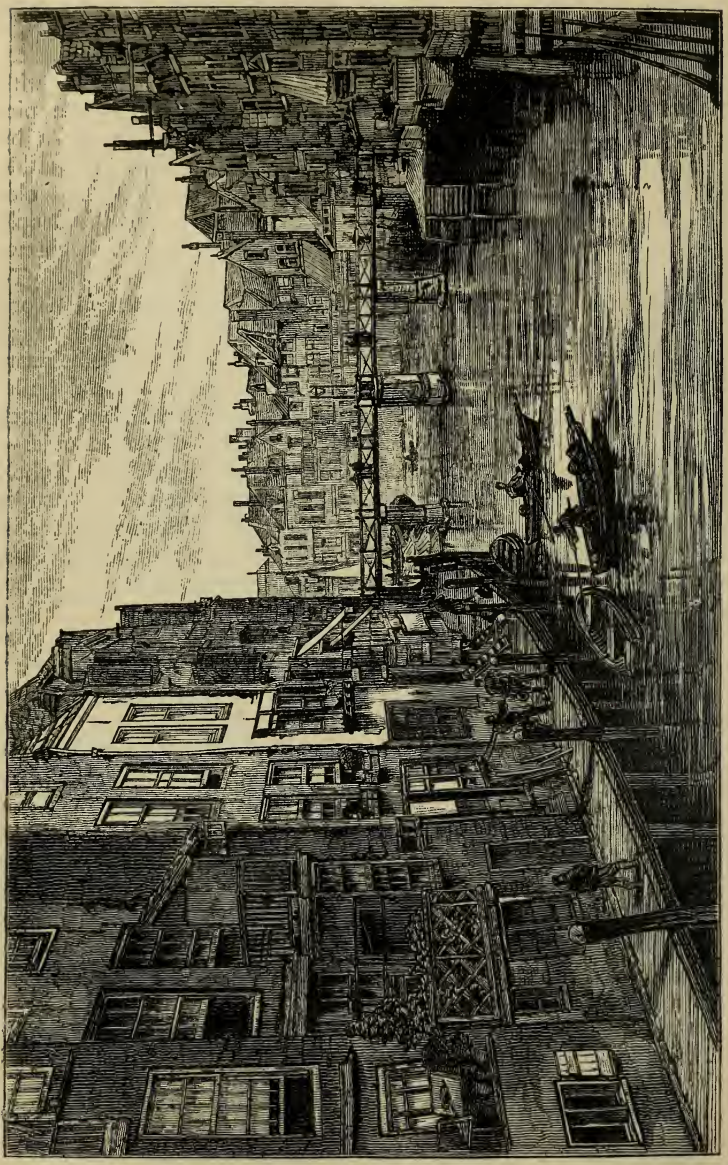
chord in the heart of man. But, setting comparisons aside, which seldom tend to profit, Holland has its own peculiar and individual attractions and advantages: and they are of a kind not to be found elsewhere.

Dort, said to be the oldest city in Holland, bears this appearance. It is essentially a representative town of the true Dutch type, with all its peculiar and interesting characteristics: the extreme picturesqueness of quaintness and antiquity. It has been spoilt by modernisation less than any other city of Holland within accessible distance. In the dead cities you find much that is quaint and old-fashioned; a good deal to repay you for the journey; but few people take the trouble to reach these out-of-the-way places, which cannot be seen without a certain amount of time and inconvenience. To the Dutch themselves the dead cities are a sealed book. No one thinks of going there except on business. Many of them will laugh at you, indeed, for what they call the eccentric folly of an Englishman, in travelling so far merely to see a few crazy houses and old buildings and peculiar types of character. When I asked my Dutch friend J. to accompany me to Enkhuisen—one of the dead cities—he opened his eyes and put on such a look of resigned, melancholy despair as seemed to say his life's doom was sealed: and then, in the kindness of his heart, yielded to my wish. It haunts me still. I could not have dragged him away after that look, even had I not found it would take two whole days of such roughing as I just then somewhat shirked. So the Dutch never go to these places. Perhaps with them it is a case of toujours perdrix. Surrounded at home by the influence of quaintness and antiquity, they care not to seek it elsewhere; perhaps do not care for it at all. Moreover, they are not particularly adventurous, and a new gulden has more charms for them than an old coin. Considering the smallness of their country they know little about it.

But without going up to the dead cities, here, within a few miles of Rotterdam, is a town that will thoroughly satisfy the antiquarian. Age stares you in the face. On all sides such an accumulation of old and interesting houses, that in perambulating the streets you turn your head from side to side like a Chinese mandarin, and scarce know how to take it all in, and yet proceed. I had heard no one in Holland speak of Dort in terms of praise. Those of whom I made inquiries had never seen it. My visit was but the result of an impression that something worthy of note would be found there. Far short, indeed, was the expectation of the reality—not always the rule in life. I saw and wondered.

Street after street of ancient houses. Every possible outline that professed anything of the picturesque. Few of the square, stiff, straight buildings familiar to ordinary experience. Not only ancient outlines, but house-fronts also. No modernized bricks and stone; no window-sashes painted white; at least for the most part. There

were of course many exceptions, but there was quite enough to keep up the unity of aspect and character.



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Now, crossing a bridge, would be caught the sweep of the house overhanging the water, rounding out of sight, crescent-shaped

Nothing could be more picturesque or ancient looking, more quaint and interesting than one of these canals. Every house hoary with age, varying in shape and size: now tall, with gabled roof, now small and diminutive, as if gradually sinking into decrepitude and the grave. Here and there wooden balconies overhung the water, covered with creepers and flowers, that drooped in graceful boughs and tendrils: emblems of life and beauty amidst decay. The water beneath reflected all the quaint multitude of outlines.

Above every town in Holland—the dead cities scarce excepted—Dort carries you back into the past centuries: away from the world of to-day into that of the Middle Ages. No town I had visited so delighted me. I had seen nothing like it in Holland. It was not, as in some places, a house or a building here and there standing out from its neighbours to delight by its charms; it was the general tone and character of the whole place. The marvel of passing from street to street, and finding the one prevailing type of age and beauty. So that at last one could only exclaim: "And still they come!" And the wonderful old canal views were multiplied.

Many of the small side streets: only wide enough to admit our startling and original equipage, and send an affrighted pedestrian flying into a doorway for refuge, whence they would peep out with wonder in their eyes and homage in their mien: many of these small side streets were full of diminutive houses dating back three centuries and more, untouched since the days of their first youth. One of the characteristics of the place was the remarkable manner in which many of the houses were out of the perpendicular. This is the case more or less throughout Holland. The soil being loose and sandy, the piles sink, the foundations give way, and the houses nod to each other. But in Dort the feature was carried often to almost an alarming point. In many instances it looked as if a gentle push would send down an old building crashing to the earth. More than once it was difficult to pass a leaning tenement without positive fear. Not a few were propped up with beams to support their old age. This feature materially added to the picturesqueness of the town; increased the look and feeling of antiquity; of a life ended; seldom met with, but full of inexpressible charm.

Vainly I endeavoured to persuade myself that a few hours were sufficient to give to Dort. A whole week might be devoted to it. Not to the finding out of fresh beauties, but to revelling in its old-world atmosphere. Were I an artist, there for a time would I pitch my tent, and live in a world of my own, and feast upon its wonders. Transferred to canvas they would bring fame and fortune to anyone who could sympathise with these influences, and reproduce them with all their peculiar feeling and perfection: give life by his brush to the spirit they breathe.

Here and there, it is true, an incongruity declared itself. In one street were two houses side by side; the one old and dilapidated,

and bearing the date of 1500; the other a small, square, yellow building, with 1876 displayed in large iron figures. But it was easy to pass this over and forget it, where there was so much more worthy of remembrance. So also not a few of the houses had been modernized and ruined; but they were, after all, the exception. The general and prevailing aspect of Dort is that of antiquity. And in these days when such old landmarks are passing away, let us be grateful for what we find. There is much to create the feeling in Dort. Even Nuremberg, it is reported, is changing aspect. It was recently said they are knocking down the old walls, and disturbing and breaking up the perfection of that marvellous town. If it be true, let us renounce our love and veneration for these ancient places, which link past with present, and carry us back to the days when men were strong in art and taste; when the world was not pampered and weakened by too much refinement; when the face of the globe was not what it is now, politically, morally, and socially; when a great battle lost, and won, would change the destiny of a nation. Errors and superstition and ignorance abounded if you will; but men also possessed a force and vigour of character, a simplicity of life; a certain light and reality we do not easily find to-day. How some of those figures stand out, clear in outline, vigorous in deeds and character; and as ages roll on, how those outlines seem to gain in breadth and vividness, rather than pale and diminish. No doubt, to be just, the times had much to do with it; that period of transition the world had reached. To-day its canvas is overcrowded: we have fallen into the snares and shoals of luxury and refinement; influences that enervate and weaken, and become sometimes a mortal disease. Morbid imaginations will tell you we are running to seed. If this be true, let us hope the seed will take fresh root and spring upwards, and bear good fruit to the glory of the time to come.

In the Middle Ages Dort was the wealthiest city in Holland. It is no longer that, or it would not have fallen into its present condition of interest. So far it has had its day. But its position renders it a place of some importance. It is an island: not surrounded by the sea—though that is not so very far off—but by the river Maas. The island was formed by the inundation of 1421. The tide of the estuary of the Rhine, breaking through the dykes, covered a vast district. Seventy-two villages and 100,000 lives were destroyed by the waters. Much of the country round about Dort is in consequence marshy and flooded. Dort is also historically interesting. The first assembly of the independent States of Holland was held here in 1572, resulting in the foundation of the Republic of the United Dutch Provinces. Here the great Synod of 1618 was held, to which most countries sent deputies, and wherein laws were passed that for long guided the Dutch Reformed Church. Calvinists and Arminians disputed one with another as they have continued to dispute, or to agree to differ, down to the present time. Yet each sect

possesses, doubtless, its good points. As a learned divine and cherished friend recently and wisely remarked: "Every man should be a Calvinist upon his knees and an Arminian in his life." I, reader, of mine own self, could pretend to give you no counsel so good as this.

The fine old church tower is a conspicuous object for miles around. The church itself is certainly amongst the most interesting in Holland. It dates back to the fourteenth century; is of Gothic architecture, simple and beautiful, and less spoilt than many of the churches of Holland. But the interiors of all their churches, without exception, are so arranged as to destroy the general effect, which might sometimes be fine and imposing. The division of that portion from the choir where marriages are celebrated, and which I believe is called the high altar, is fatal to the long unbroken sweep that is so great a charm in many a church and cathedral. The interior rests on fifty-six pillars, to which the pointed arches they support add greater beauty. The roof is lofty, and the white pointed windows, were they but of stained glass, would leave little to be desired. As it is, the "dim religious light" that so appeals to the imagination, so adds to the beauty of ecclesiastical architecture, is altogether wanting. On a bright day the eye, tired with too strong a glare, seeks repose and finds it not. The choir is apsidal and spacious, whence radiate the chapels. The roof is decorated with arabesques of the sixteenth century. The finely-carved oak stalls are decaying—the most unpleasant feature in the building. They look dirty and dilapidated, and have evidently fallen into disuse. The screen separating the choir from the nave is a piece of magnificent old brass workmanship; the pulpit is of white marble, beautifully sculptured. Equally beautiful is the huge sounding-board above it, of dark carved oak.

I had the temerity to mount the tower. A fat old Dutchman had preceded me by a quarter of an hour. When I reached the top I found him still breathless and exhausted, taking observations with an instrument. The view was remarkable. The town lay stretched at our feet; its houses, with their quaint black and red gabled roofs, looking, from this point, more ancient than ever. Canals wound about in every direction, one of them almost at the very base of the tower. It was impossible to look down from this height upon the glittering water without a shudder: a wonder as to how many unhappy men had hurled themselves into its cold depths: passed in a moment from time to eternity. Several big ships were at anchor in the fine harbour. The flat country extended itself on every side far as the eye could reach. Rotterdam might easily be discerned in the distance, and, beyond it, the pale sea.

The church is almost the only building in Dort worth visiting. The town-hall is modern and uninviting; but the town itself renders one quite indifferent to its institutions or the want of them. We

had still some little time to spare, and the driver dived into the suburbs. They are more than usually interesting. Fine avenues of trees, whose branches meet overhead and form pleasant drives on hot sunny days. Here many of the rich merchants of Holland have built themselves charming villas, that look the essence of coolness and delight. Unlike the English, who seek to screen themselves from the gaze of the curious by building as far as possible from a public thoroughfare, and further embower themselves in trees and shrubs, the Dutch do the very opposite. They erect their villas in the most conspicuous places, on the very edge of frequented roads and paths. In one narrow lane we met a dashing carriage and pair, belonging possibly to a rich Dutch butter merchant. Its occupants stared at our nondescript vehicle in the most disdainful manner, and

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seemed to take us for an importation from Patagonia, or the triumphal car of a savage chief. Triumph or not, it was at least a progress; and in due time we reached the steamboat pier. How I felt when I touched terra firma I will not record; nay, I could not. Powers of description have their limits. Suffice it that, on looking back, the tortures of the old monkish days, the hard beds and horsehair shirts, the castigations and self-inflicted torments, seem as mere child's play compared with that drive. Yet would I go over it again with delight, were the ordeal to prove twice as terrible. As I hope to do, some day.

The little steamer was on the point of starting. As we left the quay, the quaint old gateway frowned down upon us. Beyond it might be traced many ancient houses, with their red gabled roofs. To the right the fine old tower reared its head. The splendid railway

bridge crossed the Maas. It has two spans of 287 feet, two of 211, and two swing bridges, each 88 feet long. Holland must be visited for specimens of magnificent workmanship and engineering.

I left Dort with infinite regret: with many a hope of some day returning thither. The journey to Rotterdam down the Maas was particularly pleasant. It was a roomy little steamer with an awning over a portion of the deck. The town gradually faded from view, until it was altogether lost. The river, as we began our journey, was bordered on one side by a long avenue of trees; on the other it was flat and marshy, and tall reeds and rushes grew at the edge of the banks. Every now and then we stopped at a village to land passengers, or to take on board those awaiting us in a small boat on the stream. Women in picturesque costumes and ponderous ornaments enlivened the decks, and laughed and chattered amidst themselves. Shipbuilding was carried on more or less to within sight of Rotterdam. The banks would frequently echo with the sound of the hammer and anvil. But before reaching our destination work was over for the night, and the men were going home in gangs. At one place we took on board a hand-cart and a cargo of baskets, and hard work it proved. At the same place half a dozen sacks of grain were landed, and one of the sacks burst, and the golden wheat poured out upon the deck, to the consternation of all concerned. This delayed our progress; but so novel and entertaining was the scene that delay was not loss of time. Barges and rafts passed us, going up the river; and now a large pleasure boat, as thronged with passengers as any ever seen on the Thames. The blue sky was vividly reflected in the water; the white floating clouds, and the sunbeams now lowering towards the west. At last, after an hour and a half's journey, the shipping of Rotterdam hove in sight; the town disclosed itself. A sharp turn to the right, we steamed into the fine harbour of the Maas, and came to an anchor.

Rotterdam looked more gay and lively than ever by contrast with Dort; but also less antiquated and interesting. Yet, strolling through its streets at a somewhat later hour, it could only be admitted that it possessed a charm and an influence most especially its own. The opal tints of the clear, pale sky were fading into twilight. From one of the bridges the long stretch of water could be traced right and left. Barges of all colours crowded its surface. Houses and trees, and even the towering church steeples were reflected in the canal. Men and women were chatting on board their craft, and looked as if they had nothing to do but laugh dull care away. Everything around seemed endowed with life, even the very air that blew up from the sea in soft fresh breezes. There was a warmth of colouring over all; a tone not to be found elsewhere. Nothing could be more Dutchlike; more foreign to English eyes. The market-place, as usual, was full of stalls and customers. Everyone seemed to be buying up heaps of

strawberries; and, as may often be noticed, those who were doing the most business looked the most melancholy and woe-begone; as though the burden of life was very hard to bear under such prosperous circumstances. The graceful statue of Erasmus was in its old place, facing the House of a Thousand Terrors.

But there were no terrors here to-night. Wars and rumours of wars were going on in the far East; for this happy and prosperous little country it seemed as if all wars were over. They have nothing to do but eat, drink, and sleep; go on in their quiet, thrifty way, adding one gulden to another, and leaving the world beyond to settle its own differences. Thus calmly with them the seasons follow each other; the days and the nights; the months and the years; joy and sorrow; youth quietly gives place to age; raven locks grow white; the smooth cheek furrowed; their calendars are marked with many red letters; one generation passes away and is no more seen; another comes and in its turn yields the palm; Tibni dies and Omri reigns. And it is always the same old story.

CHARLES W. WOOD.

THE YEW-TREE WALK.

Dusky-leaved and pruned to primness, pleasant was its green retreat,
Where, within its dewy dimness, blue-eyed violets blossomed sweet;
While the poet's idle fancies, as within its bowers he lay,
Peopled it with fair romances, borrowed from a bygone day.

Not by ruins, crumbling slowly, did its gloomy foliage wave,
Nor where daisies, meek and lowly, smiled above a quiet grave,
Where the lonely mourner, weeping, lingered late on twilight eves,
With the night-bird vigil keeping, from her home amid the leaves;

But within a garden haunted by the sweetest flowers that grew,
Where the tulips gaily flaunted gorgeous urns of rainbow hue;
Roses by the dial olden, budding redly one by one,
Wide-rayed blossoms quaint and golden, turning ever to the sun.

Linnets warbled long and loudly from the bows that screened their nests,
On the terrace, pacing proudly, peacocks sunned their royal crests;
While the wind-swept trees kept sighing, like a streamlet's murmurings,
And the doves in circles flying fanned the air with silver wings.

Age, with wrinkled brow of sadness, sauntered slowly in its shade,
Childhood, in its fearless gladness, underneath its branches played;
Lovers sought its green recesses when the moonlight shimmered bright,
And low vows and soft caresses thrilled its mazes with delight.

Here hath sorrow, heavy hearted, sped its shafts of silent prayer,
Maiden, from her true love parted, strolled adown it full of care;
Still upon each brown stem linger names and mottoes half effaced,
True love knots by sportive finger in some happy moment traced.

ONE OF THE WORLD'S SACRIFICES.

THE glow of the setting sun turned the yellow hedge blossoms into drops of molten gold, as two lovers stood at a rustic gate, and talked, as lovers will talk, of every subject under the sun, except the one that filled both hearts with content so ineffable.

Henry May, as steady and as trustworthy a civil engineer as ever held a staff, idly switched the blossoms with a willow rod; and Mr. Strong's pretty daughter made the air musical with her silvery laugh, or grew suddenly grave, according to her mood or to the glances he cast at the blithe young girl.

"I'm going out at last, Ethel."

"You are!" answered Ethel, in a tone of affected surprise, as she looked up to the grave face of her lover, a provoking smile on her red lips.

"You do not believe it?"

"I have heard that threat too often to put much faith in its execution," laughed Ethel.

"A threat do you call it?"

"Have you not said the same thing, oh! a dozen times? But you have not gone; and I know you must only say it to tease me—perhaps to try me."

"To try you, yes—to tease you, no. Ethel, you know what I have waited for."

He spoke with marked seriousness, and the smiles left her face, which was fresh and dimpled as that of an infant. She did know what he had waited for—for her to say, Yes, to the question he had so often put to her. And she would not or could not say it.

Mr. May was rising rapidly in his profession. The firm to which he was attached wished him to go out to Canada to superintend certain works of theirs of great importance that were already in progress there. It would be a rise for him, and a lucrative one. But he was determined not to go out without his wife, the pretty Ethel—at least, if he could by any possibility induce her to go. Nothing would have pleased her better. To marry and go out there with him was her day-dream; but she cherished it in secret, for her duty, as she considered, obliged her to remain at home. When with him she would treat the matter lightly, just to hide the pain and doubt at her heart.

"The decision is no longer in my own hands, Ethel," said Mr. May, his tender tone grave and earnest. "Robertson, who has been in Canada superintending, as you know, is down with sickness, and when he is able to travel is coming home. I must go in his place; no alternative is left me. I ought to be off within a week; but if I

may take you with me, I can be allowed to delay my departure for one month, to give me time for preparation."

Her face was now graver than his: the dimples had left the damask cheeks—the smiles the sweet and delicate lips.

"We can be married at once, even this next week, if you will, Ethel, or we can delay it until just before we start, as you and your mother shall see fit to decide."

Ethel turned slowly, and looked across the wide green lawn that led to a cozy farm-house, with odd gables covered with ivy, and cool porches shaded by climbing roses trained up the old-fashioned pillars and festooned above the quaint windows.

"Harry," she said, in a low tone, "you know why I cannot say it."

He knitted his broad, fine brow. "I am growing rather tired of waiting, Ethel."

"I know. You think me unreasonable."

"I think that you cannot care for me: at least, not as I hoped and thought you did."

"How many years have you waited, Henry?" she asked, suddenly facing him.

"Well—let me see." Henry May paused, with a short, nervous laugh, and laid his hand on Ethel's nut-brown hair, thinking absently how bright were the golden threads in the smooth braids. "Ethel!" he broke out, suddenly, "what beautiful hair you have!"

"That is not answering my question."

"Oh, about the number of years I have waited for you?" he said, laughing lightly. "Well, I believe it must be getting on for two years. But it has seemed very long indeed to me, Ethel."

Ethel was silent. She plucked at the golden blossoms at her side, listening dreamily to the sad complaint of some belated night-bird, whose mournful notes disturbed the serenity of the calm June evening.

"And now I cannot wait any longer, as you perceive, Ethel," he went on. "Oh, my love, my love! why should you continue to sacrifice our happiness to a chimera?"

"A chimera! Henry, how can you call it so?"

"I do call it so. But I will not go over the old reasonings and arguments again to-night: you may consider I have used them all too frequently. One way or the other, Ethel, your decision must be given. What is it to be?"

"Give me until to-morrow morning," sighed Ethel, lifting a pair of beseeching eyes to his face.

"So be it," he replied, in a sad tone. "But, Ethel, I seem to know what your answer will be. How is it that other girls give up home, parents, friends, for their love's sake; while you cling to everything and everyone rather than to the man you have professed to love above all the world?"

"I cannot tell." Ethel's voice quivered as she spoke, and a few hot tears fell from her downcast eyes. "I am sure I do—care—for

you well enough to go to the ends of the earth with you: I do—I do. But you know that my father and mother cannot spare me."

"Umph!" returned Mr. May, looking away from Ethel and her pleading face. No one admired filial devotion more than he did; but he thought it might be carried, as in this case, unreasonably far. "Other parents willingly give up their daughters; why cannot yours do likewise. I have a good position to offer you, Ethel."

"I know it," sighed Ethel. "But, Henry, they do not withhold their consent without a just cause."

"You told me that they had left the decision to you."

"Yes—in a degree," she sadly answered.

"Well, you must decide, Ethel," he repeated. "I wish to take my wife with me. If you do not accompany me, I must go alone."

"Eth-el," came the call at this moment, in a feeble, treble voice from the house: and Ethel hastily picked up the blue-trimmed hat that had fallen at her feet.

"I must go, Henry; my mother needs me. Won't you come up to the house?"

"Not this evening, Ethel," he replied, bending down, until his dark moustache touched the rosy cheek. "But I will be here to-morrow to hear my fate. What time shall I come?"

"Any time. I only want to-night to think it out."

"There!—to think it out. I knew the decision lay with yourself alone, Ethel. A good night to you, my best and sweetest; and may your thoughts and dreams be propitious to me!"

"Good night, Harry," she whispered: and he might have read the despairing love in her eyes.

"But stay," he spoke, arresting his footsteps as he was turning away. "I forgot that I have to go to Easton to-morrow: and betimes, too. I suppose, Ethel, you could not manage to come out here, say, at seven in the morning? I pass down this road, you know."

"Yes," she meekly answered, "I will come."

Choking down a rising sob, she ran across the green lawn, anxious to respond to the call of her mother. Never was there a more dutiful daughter than Ethel Strong. Misfortune had fallen on her home, and she thought her duty lay in striving to lighten it.

Between one and two years ago, soon after Henry May had become engaged to Ethel, Mr. Strong was overtaken by a blow. In an evil hour he had become security to a very large amount for a friend; a friend whom he had always believed to be the soul of honour. The friend absconded, and David Strong was called upon to pay. It ruined him. He could only raise the money by mortgaging his farm deeply: the farm which had been in his family for generations, and which was to descend to his son after him. The once numerous household was discharged, one inferior servant only being retained; the once plentiful housekeeping became poor and scant.

This was obliged to be. Mr. Strong took to toil out of doors almost as a labourer; Mrs. Strong and Ethel had to do most of the work within.

It was a terrible trial; and it told terribly upon the old couple. From healthy people, growing rather elderly, they suddenly changed, losing strength and spirit; and now they were bowed, worn, and broken; looking like a very old man and woman for whom the grave was waiting. How could Ethel leave them?

Mrs. Strong sat in the best kitchen, knitting, as Ethel entered. The sitting-rooms had been much neglected since their fallen fortunes: to sit here saved trouble. She had a meek, feeble kind of face, and her voice was querulous.

"Where have you been, child?"

"Only at the gate beyond the lawn, mother," answered Ethel, brightly: for this dutiful girl threw all the sunshine upon the house that manner and cheery speech could throw.

"With Harry May?"

"Yes, mother."

Mrs. Strong sighed. She regarded the young man with a sort of resentment, because he wanted to carry off Ethel. Perhaps misfortune makes people selfish.

"He is at last going to Canada, mother. It is impossible that he can put it off longer."

"He can go," said Mrs. Strong. "And so much the better for you, Ethel. I am sure he distracts your mind like anything."

"Oh, mother! Why do you object to him?"

"We don't object to him in any way: you must not think that: neither I nor your father. He is steady, persevering, and his position will be very good in time. But, Ethel, we cannot spare you."

"No?" was the faint answer.

"It might be better for you to give him up at once. I suppose he has asked you to go with him to this Canada?"

"Yes."

"Then, child, it *will* be better for you to give him up. Before he gives up you."

"He will not do that, mother."

"He will, though. It will be years before we can spare you, for you can't leave us while we are in this world; and he will grow tired of waiting for you and of being out there alone."

The spoken prevision was so exceedingly like what Ethel's own conscience foretold, that she turned sick and faint. Her mother saw her agitation.

"He wants to take you? Urges it strongly, I suppose?"

"He wants me to be married at once, within a month, and to take me out. Yes, mother, he urges it strongly."

"And you will go?"

"Not unless you and my father can spare me."

"But how can we spare you, Ethel?"

"Biddy is a steady, willing girl, mother, and is getting to be a good servant. And you have always Roger, you know. And Harriet lives only a mile away, and would often come over to you."

"I see what it is—you mean to leave us," cried the poor mother, fractiously. "Well, you are of age, Ethel—two-and-twenty this year—and we can't stop you."

"Mother, you need not speak in that way," said Ethel, with a rising sob. "I only said I would go if you and my father could spare me."

"No one can ever fill your place to us, Ethel. Biddy—Harriet—what are they? Just a heedless servant; just a heedless niece, who has her husband and her baby to take up her time and thoughts. And, child, there's another thing: we have not a spare shilling to purchase you an outfit."

Ethel had put her arms on the table and bent her head on them, not caring that her distress should be seen. Mrs. Strong was sobbing deeply.

"Oh, Ethel, my child, don't go from us!" she pleaded. "Your father's health and strength are failing; Roger has his own pursuits in an evening and is out on the farm by day. What comfort would he be to me?—what good? Don't add to our dreadful burdens by abandoning us now!"

Mrs. Strong sat with her hands clasped despairingly in her lap. Ethel dropped down on the stool at her mother's feet and began to weep bitterly.

"Don't cry, Ethel," said Mrs. Strong, laying her thin hand on Ethel's nut-brown hair. "The night is always darkest before dawn. You have been a faithful daughter, and God will reward you for it; it may not be in this world, but it will in the next."

But Ethel could not be comforted. She loved her parents; to see them have to work in their old age was a bitter grief to her: she loved her only brother. But she loved Henry May also, with a different and passionate love, and her tender, womanly heart clung to him, as the drowning cling to some frail plank that bears them to life and safety.

"So, mother, you think I cannot go!" she sighed, after a fit of agonised weeping.

"Not for a little while, my child—not for a year or two, if Henry May will wait. Who knows what a year or so may bring forth? And, my darling girl, there's the supper to lay: your father will be in."

Ethel made no protest of any kind. Drying her eyes, she arose to set about her work, and Mrs. Strong took up her knitting again. She loved her daughter, and desired, above all things, to see her happily settled in life. But circumstances were against it: as they are against many who sit in the shadow of ill-fortune and patiently wait for some brighter day to dawn.

"Poor Ethel!" sighed her worn old father, when the evening's conversation and doubts were repeated to him. "My child's happiness is dearer to me than all the money in the world; but the Mays are proud people, and Ethel cannot go among them like a beggar."

"A beggar, David?"

"Yes, wife, what else would it be? I could not even buy her her wedding dress. Ethel, child, for how long a time does Harry expect to go out?"

"He does not say, father. It is of course uncertain."

"Not very uncertain, I fancy," spoke Mr. Strong, his feeble voice all in a quaver, as it generally was now. "An enterprise such as that cannot be accomplished under eight or ten years, and I conclude he will have to see its completion."

Ethel sighed. That his entire stay might be as long as that she knew; but he would come home between whiles.

It was one of the most painful evenings Ethel had ever passed—perhaps more painful than any she ever would pass. Her father and mother were weeping and wailing at the possibility of losing her, and, as Mr. Strong put it, how could the house go on without Ethel now? It chanced that at this time her brother was away: he had gone to spend a few days with some friends at a distance. Had he been at home he might have taken up his sister's cause, and results might have been different: she often thought so in after years. He was one year older than herself, and he loved her very dearly. Mr. and Mrs. Strong had married late in life: he was turned sixty now—she fast approaching it.

So Ethel's fate was sealed. Her father finally declared that she should be left to her own free decision to go or stay. But how could she decide against them? She believed that her duty lay in remaining in the old farm homestead, and she was too good a daughter to rebel against it. All night long, lying on the snowy bed in her pretty room, she did battle with her inclinations, and prayed to be helped to bear the travail and the sorrow.

She did not forget her appointment for seven o'clock, and went out as the clock struck. Henry May was already at the lawn gate. Years after he remembered—he ever would remember—the picture she made, as she came slowly down the path, the morning sunlight kissing her nut-brown hair, the faint flush on her fresh young cheeks, while the birds were singing in the trees and the dew glistened on the grass.

Extending his hand, he took hers within it in silence, and looked at her steadfastly and searchingly.

"Well, Ethel?"

She burst into tears. She could not speak.

"Is it to be yes, or no?"

"Oh, Henry, Henry!" she sobbed: and too surely he then knew what the answer was to be. He dropped her hand.

"Do not blame me harshly," she sobbed, lifting her now pale face

pleadingly to his. "It is my duty to stay at home. I cannot act against that."

His lips tightened visibly. "So you prefer duty to love, Ethel!"

"I—think—when the two clash, it is not duty that should give way. Do you?"

"Generally speaking—no. But, Ethel, I do not see this matter quite as you see it. When you became engaged to me your father and mother fully understood that I should probably want to take you away, and they made no demur to it."

"But things have changed. They *require* me now."

"No, they do not. If it is for home matters you mean, let them take some one in your place. And they have your brother. And Harriet Marshal would be unto them almost as a daughter."

Painfully agitated, she was entwining her hands one within the other.

"I do think, Ethel, that you are in this instance taking an exaggerated view of your duty. Do you owe nothing to me? Is it fair to have kept me waiting all these years, and to fail me now?"

"I—I cannot help myself," she sobbed.

"That is, you do not love me sufficiently well to make this effort for me."

"Do not doubt my love," she returned, anguish bringing forth the avowal. "I shall love and esteem you above all others while my life shall last."

"But—you decide against me? You send me forth alone."

"Yes. But oh, Henry, don't you see that I have no alternative? Believe me that I have none. None."

He extended his hands to take both hers. His face was a little agitated, but stern. That she was using him harshly, he fully believed. We all see from our own point of view and not from another's.

"Good-bye, then. And may God keep you, Ethel, until we meet again!"

He kissed the sweet face that was so full of pain. It would be marked with many a line of sorrow before that time should come.

In that way they parted. Nothing was said on either side as to whether the engagement between them should continue or not. Ethel almost thought that his last words, "until we meet again," implied that it did. And no arrangement was made with regard to correspondence. As she went back to the house that bright June morning, her heart felt well-nigh breaking with its pain.

Mr. May departed for Canada. He became absorbed in the cares of his new undertaking; and the time went on. Ethel received a letter from him occasionally, written in a cordial, friendly spirit, but containing no lover-like expressions. He told her all about his new home, and his life there, and described the country graphically, and inquired after the old friends he had left behind. Ethel wrote back

to him in just the same friendly spirit: but she knew not whether he still considered she belonged to him.

Troubles closed in around her as the years went on. Sickness came. Roger, the hope and pride of the family, was laid to rest beside the dead-and-gone Strongs in the shady and peaceful churchyard. His mother followed him in a few months: and Ethel alone remained to comfort the poor old father, whose later life had been so full of work, so hard and cheerless.

If Ethel's heart ached, no one knew it. If her woman's tenderness craved a husband's love, or the sweet caresses that might have kept her young and buoyant, no one suspected it. There were moments of depression when she felt inclined to say that God had dealt hardly with her in many ways, yet her faith in Him never wavered. Neither did her feet ever falter, as she administered to the wants of the frail old father, who lived in the light of her smile.

Four years had gone by. One balmy evening Ethel sat in the shady arbour, sewing diligently. Her father dozed in an arm-chair at an open window within view: while a thrush, swinging on a bough above Ethel's brown head, burst out into a gush of song that filled the still air with melody.

"Ethel!"

Ethel looked up. Her old lover, bronzed and bearded, stood before her. She had heard footsteps, certainly, but supposed it to be only one of the men. Down fell her work as she rose up, full of bewildered agitation.

"Are you quite well?" he asked.

She put her hand into his, answering she knew not what. Mr. May sat down beside her.

He told her how well he was prospering: that Canada would have to be his home yet for years, perhaps for life. He inquired into all her home changes and trials: the substance of them he knew, but not the details.

Then for a little while they sat in silence. And he, looking into the face that had lost its early bloom and brightness only to gain a more spiritual beauty, could yet see little to give him hope in the steady, thoughtful eyes.

"You have changed much, Ethel."

"Ah, I suppose so. Time and sorrow change us all," she added, sadly.

"Will you be my wife now, Ethel?"

She only replied by a fit of trembling. Oh, if she might be! But there was no hope.

He had come home all that way to ask the question, he said, not choosing to trust to a letter: speech was more eloquent than written words, more persuasive. He had waited for her all these years: but his patience was exhausted now.

"And you surely will not say nay to me again?" he urged. "You cannot be so cruel, Ethel."

She shook her head pitiably, and pointed to her sleeping father. "I am all that is left to him, Henry. While he lives, I must be at hand to comfort him."

"He may live for years. He is only sixty-five, or so."

"True. He may live for years. His health is good now."

"Would he come out with us, do you think?"

"It would be impossible. To take him from the home of his lifetime would kill him. He will never leave it: he must live and die in it."

"Have you learnt to care for any other man?" Mr. May asked in a modified tone.

"I shall never care for anyone but you. I shall never marry. You are denied to me, but no one else will ever win regard from me or call me wife."

"Do you understand, Ethel, that this is the last time I shall be able to put the question to you?"

"Yes—I suppose it is. Of course it is. It is very good of you to come again."

"This is your final answer to me?"

"It is the only answer I can give."

He spoke a little further then. Canada was the country of his adoption; at least it would be for years to come; he had his house and home in it, but he must have a wife. And Ethel gathered, more by her own instinct than by his spoken words, that if she still declined to be that wife, he would seek another.

"There is some one else you wish to take in my place!" she hastily said, her heart fluttering strangely.

"No, Ethel, I wish to take *you*."

"But—as I cannot go?"

"Then in that case I must do the best I can, failing you. There is a young lady out there whom I esteem greatly; and whom I should like to look upon always as a dear friend, or sister. I do not *love* her: I shall never love anyone but you; and if you will go with me she will be to us both as this friend and sister. She has heard of you."

"And—if I do not go, you will marry her?"

"Most probably. I tell you, Ethel, I am sick and tired of being alone. My darling, *won't* you come with me?"

Once more, as in the years gone by, she wrung her hands to pain. But she could give him no better answer than the one already given.

"You have wasted your best years, you have sacrificed the dearest hopes of your life to your inordinate sense of duty," he said. "You have sacrificed me. No other woman would have done so."

"Yes, she would," sighed Ethel. "I am no better or wiser than my sisters, and the world is full of such sacrifices. Whatever work God gives me to do, that I will do, bravely and patiently. I *know*

that it must be best for me, or the trial would not be sent. For oh, it is a trial, sore and endless. Yours, Henry, is as nothing to mine."

Mr. Strong opened his eyes, and put on his spectacles to see what tall fine man was in the arbour talking to his daughter. Henry May went in to say a few words of greeting; and then returned to Ethel.

"It is to be then, Ethel? There's no hope?"

"It *must* be. Heaven help me!"

"Fare you well, my best and dearest. Fare you well for ever."

A convulsive sob broke from her aching heart. And he pressed his last kiss upon her lips.

Thus they parted. Never, in all probability, to meet again on this side of the Eternal City. It was one of the world's sacrifices.

Never again; as Ethel thought, and as he thought. But, curious to say, Mr. Strong himself came to the rescue.

Whether he had heard aught of what passed between them in the arbour, or whether his better nature rose up within him, Ethel never knew. She heard her name spoken hastily.

"Yes, father?"

"Is Mr. May going?"

"He is gone, father. He is now passing out at the gate."

"Call him back. Say I would speak a word to him."

And the departing steps were soon returning.

A curious look of hope, like a ray of light, shone on Henry May's face. Did instinct give rise to it? Mr. Strong, looking at him attentively, stretched out his hand to take that of the engineer.

"Will you tell me what you have been telling Ethel?"

And the tale was told. All his hopes, all his pleading; and Ethel's grievous answer.

"Says it would kill me to go to Canada, does she?—thinks I could not die away from my own home? Well, I don't know. I have always had a wish to see Canada: a cousin of mine went out there in early life and made his fortune. I could not be separated from *her*, you know, Harry May: but I don't see why I should not live as long there as here."

The tears were in the old man's eyes, though he spoke in a quaint joking tone. Ethel stood with clasped hands and parted lips, hardly daring to believe what she heard. Her lover caught her to him with a sob of emotion, and pressed the aged hands with gratitude so fervent that Mr. Strong cried out for quarter.

"You may get your wedding-gown made, child. And the sooner we start, after that, the better."

"Oh, father, father!"—with a burst of joyous tears—"how shall we ever thank you?"

"By taking loving care of him," whispered Henry May.

So, after all, this was *not* to be one of the world's sacrifices. But, alas! many such take place daily.

THE BEAUTY IN THE WOOD.

"JACQUES, my good fellow, this last mile has been perfectly intolerable. If you do not reach your much-boasted hostelry soon, not only my horse, but I, myself, shall be utterly exhausted," and the speaker grew a shade whiter and reeled forward in his saddle as he spoke.

It was nearly the close of a sultry September day, and the sun was sinking, like a ball of fire, behind the distant mountains in upper Lorraine. The riders had been in the saddle for many hours, but one of them, a middle-aged, sturdy-looking peasant, seemed hardly the worse for the fatigue. His companion was a tall man, young and handsome. He wore a military dress, and carried a small case, much resembling a despatch-box, slung in front of his saddle. He looked like an Englishman, with his blonde beard and deep blue eyes: but his dashing, soldierly seat in the saddle had been learned in many a wild charge over the battle-field.

Jacques shook his head. "What would m'sieu have?" he asked, with a helpless shrug. "The horses are good beasts, none better, but what horse can travel from dawn to sunset without failing? It is only wonderful that they do not fall by the roadside, and then—what would Maitre Pierre say? As for the village of St. Etienne, it is seven good miles by the road—five, as the crow flies; what would m'sieu have? It is destiny." All this in an execrable patois, with many gesticulations and untranslatable shrugs.

"Destiny or not, my good Jacques," returned the other, in fluent French, "I must sit down by the roadside soon, and let you go on alone; my wound is growing more painful, and there is a sensation accompanying it which I don't like. Think again, my friend; you say that you know the country hereabouts—is there not some hut, however simple, this side of St. Etienne, where I can rest for a while? Seven miles more of this torture in my shoulder would be more than I can endure and keep my senses."

Even Jacques' stolid soul was not proof against the testimony of the grey pallor of his master's face. He saw plainly that faintness was overcoming him. Jacques' hands went up in an invocation to his patron saint.

"There is one place not more than two miles off where perhaps I could take m'sieu; but there are difficulties. It is a place where no one goes—indeed, they say that Mère Margot is an old witch, although she is related to me—the Madonna defend us!" and Jacques crossed himself devoutly. "But if m'sieu will promise on his sacred word as a gentleman never to reveal that he has been there, or that I took him ——"

"Yes, yes," interrupted the other, impatiently, "anything that you will; but, for heaven's sake, lead the way. Is there no brandy in your flask?"

Jacques pulled it out. "Hardly a half wine-glass left, m'sieu; but take it, pray."

A faint tinge of colour came back to the wounded man's face after swallowing the brandy, and in a few moments he declared himself ready to proceed.

"Very well; but if m'sieu is going to the château he must turn out of the highway and go direct into the forest."

"Have I not told you to lead the way?" said the other. Then, less impatiently, "A château, Jacques? I think that the farther you and I keep from châteaux in this part of Lorraine the better for the safety of our necks."

"Ah, but m'sieu mistakes," said Jacques, eagerly. "They belong to the French noblesse, these D'Orvâles. It is a singular family: but the last Baron fell at Sedan for France, m'sieu. Would m'sieu like to hear of the last living D'Orvâle?" His companion nodded, rather carelessly, and Jacques lowered his voice and drew his horse nearer the other in his self-elected importance as raconteur.

"The last Baron was, they say, a sad, wild fellow, but very proud, like all his race. He grew up at the château with his mother, for his father died when he was a baby. But Madame, the old Baronne, ah! *she* was terrible. Everyone stood in awe of her; the old servants hated her while they trembled before her. She had the evil eye, and m'sieu knows that one dare not offend one who has that. After the Baron had been a man grown for some years, Madame, his mother, became anxious that he should marry, that the old name might not die out. So, hearing of some demoiselle in Paris, the child of an old friend and grand dame, who was of a marriageable age, she set forth on a journey to arrange the affair, leaving the Baron to his own pursuits at the château. Is monsieur listening?"

Monsieur was.

"Nobody knew how it came to pass, but after his mother's departure the Baron behaved like another man. The evil eye was removed, I suppose. The studies and books to which he had been for some time devoted were abandoned, and he went hunting and riding about the country from morning until night. Then Madame fell ill in Paris. She was always hoping to get better, and so would not send for her son: it was bad weather too: any way, monsieur, month after month passed, and she did not return. At last, one day, the servants at the château were amazed to receive instructions from their master to make ready the state apartments, for he was about to bring home a bride. Does monsieur see?"

Monsieur did.

"It was not the bride for whom his mother had destined him," continued Jacques; "but an English girl, whom he had met and

fallen in love with at the little village of St. Etienne. Some young northern demoiselle who had been travelling with friends—their governess, it was said; and she fell ill at St. Etienne and had to be left there. But oh, m'sieu, she was beautiful as a dream! The country people say her hair was like a glory about her head, and her eyes had the look of the Madonna's. No wonder the Baron worshipped her; they thought he would have died for her."

"What came of it?"

"It was months before Madame returned to Lorraine. Perhaps news travels slowly to Paris, or the Baron kept his secret well; at least, when Madame returned she did not know that a daughter-in-law awaited her. When her carriage drove up, the servants were all in the hall, and the Baron met his mother. He kissed her, and led her up to where the young Baronne stood, blushing and trembling. It seemed as if the mother divined what was to follow, for she cast an envious glance at the young lady, and said in her most insulting, haughty voice, 'Whom hast thou here, Philippe? a new housemaid? She is too pretty for the place!' It is said that the Baron answered her back with a spirit haughty as her own. 'You are quite right in thinking her too beautiful for any but the reigning place, mother; this is *my wife!*' Bold of him, was it not, monsieur?"

Monsieur nodded.

"Oh, then, m'sieu, the storm broke. The old Baronne raised her hand and cursed them both; she cursed the babe unborn. Her words were awful. 'May the babe be as beautiful and more witless than you are!' she said to the wife; 'may it show as little affection for its own flesh and blood as my son has shown for me, and may no blessing fall on the D'Orvâles until a stranger come from a distant land and bear it away from its forefathers' home!'"

"She must have been a curious old lady. Go on."

"The young Baronne fell like a dead person upon the floor, and Madame swept away to her own apartments. It was doubtless the influence of the evil eye which prevented the Baron from seeing how his poor young wife pined away after that night. And at last she gave birth to a child, and died. Two months after, the old Baronne was found dead in her bed, and rumours came abroad that there were strange black marks around her throat, as if the Fiend incarnate had come to claim his own."

The half-incredulous smile with which the stranger had listened throughout increased to one of mockery. "What became of the child?" he asked. "Did the Fiend and the old Baronne spirit that away, too?"

"Non, m'sieu; it was a girl."

"And what has become of the Baron?"

"He was killed at Sedan, m'sieu."

"Where is the child?"

"She has been always at the château, m'sieu, with old Jean-Marie, and Margot, his wife. The young lady has had a discreet dame; a gouvernante and dame de compagnie; but lately we heard that she was ill, or dead."

"Why, then, need you make so much fuss about seeking refuge at the château? Surely precautions are not needful when one only craves a night's lodging, and that of necessity?"

"Evidently monsieur does not comprehend: the château is haunted by evil things. Nothing flourishes there; all goes to decay; the families about it will not visit. And Margot! ah, she has a tongue! but I think she will admit me because she is great-aunt to my wife's cousin. Look there, m'sieu; you can see the château."

They had been going at quite a slow pace, for the road was a bad one, and evidently seldom travelled. But as they turned abruptly to the left, the tall grey turrets with their sugar-loaf peaks rose clearly before them, above the trees and the underbrush which impeded their progress. As they came nearer, the wild, deserted appearance of everything excited the stranger's attention.

"It's almost equal to a palace of the fairy-tales," said he, aloud, speaking in English. "If it were not for my nineteenth-century incredulity, I might fancy that it held the sleeping Princess of the Wood."

"Comment, m'sieu?" said Jacques, catching the words imperfectly, and fancying himself addressed.

"How do you propose to enter?" was the traveller's answering question: and again he found himself wondering whether he should not find a trumpet suspended to the gate-post, upon which he must blow a peal loud enough to awaken the sleeping inhabitants.

Jacques was looking about him, as if in some uncertainty himself. His tired master rode forward to the gateway.

"Not there, m'sieu," cried Jacques, in dismay. "There is another gate somewhere behind the château; or we might get through the hedge, perhaps, or over the wall: but we must leave our horses outside. Jean-Marie may perhaps come to see after them, but it would never do to anger la Mère Margot by riding in on horseback."

Riding round, and getting over the tangled mass of grass and overgrown weeds as they best could, Jacques peered in all directions for an entrance, and found it.

"Here is the gate, m'sieu: but it is locked. Blessed St. Jean! we cannot climb those iron railings. What is to be done?"

Upon which helpless question, the stranger impatiently seized the half hidden handle of a bell, and sounded a loud peal. Before its echoes had died away, a voice rose behind them.

"Be off! What dost thou want? We can have no stragglers about the château d'Orvâle." Just beyond the gate stood an old, withered-up woman. She looked like a bit of a vixen, but yet her black, bead-like eyes had a gleam in them that was not altogether

unkindly; on her arm was a basket half-full of wood, which she had evidently been gathering.

"La Mère Margot," began Jacques, removing his hat, and speaking in a conciliatory tone, "I am Jacques Virot; dost thou not remember? M'sieur, here, is ill, and unable to proceed even as far as St. Etienne. For old acquaintance sake, Mère Margot, give us shelter for to-night."

But Mère Margot, instead of replying to this civil speech, proceeded to rate him soundly for daring to come at all. Did his impertinence think that the château was an auberge, or that she had time to waste in getting supper for such as he? And how did she know that the stranger might not be one of those accursed Prussians, not one of whom had ever yet crossed the threshold of the château. The stranger cut short the harangue.

"I have been wounded, good mother," said he. "But I am fully able to pay you for your hospitality: though I will not offend you by offering money, knowing the hospitable reputation of the d'Orvâles." Mère Margot looked at him keenly.

"Humph!" said she. "Who are you, that you can know anything of us? Blonde and big—you are a Prussian!"

"Whether I am or not," said the stranger, disregarding her fierce tone, "I fought for France at Sedan."

The woman's face softened. "He is too young to lie while looking in my eyes," she muttered. "But—no! why should I do it? Go to St. Etienne for your lodgings."

Just then, a clear, bird-like voice was heard humming a song upon the other side of the gate. Margot gave an uneasy glance in the direction whence it came.

"I tell you, sir, we can't shelter you. Jacques Virot, begone. How dare you come here; don't you know this place is sacred?"

Lifting her hands to enforce obedience, the stranger, utterly exhausted, fell heavily to the ground. At the same moment the gate was opened, and a slight, beautiful girl appeared.

"Where's your key that you should ring, Margot? I hear Jean abusing you for forgetting it. And —— what is all this? Who are they?"

The sweet, bell-like voice faltered; the young girl drew back. Inspiration seized on Jacques. He resolved to appeal to her.

"For the love of Heaven, Mam'selle la Baronne, let me carry him in! If he has not some brandy and his wound is not dressed, he will die. See, he has fainted!"

"Bah! he is a Prussian," cried Margot; "let him die." But the little Baronne said not a word; she glided towards him.

"He will not die," she said, nodding her head, after long scrutiny of the senseless form in Jacques' arms. "But he will be company for me, and I am tired of the loneliness. Margot, tell Jean-Marie to come here, and help carry him in to the château."

She gave the order in cold, imperious tones, very singular in one so young as seventeen. Jacques looked at her in open-mouthed admiration. Margot began to grumble; but the Baronne quietly repeated her order, and Margot hobbled off, scolding as she went.

When he came out of his long swoon, he opened his eyes upon surroundings that, at first, completely bewildered him. He lay upon a wide sofa, in the centre of a large, gloomy-looking salon; Jacques was bending over him; and an old man, who kept up an incessant talking, in a species of monotone, was applying some sort of cooling lotion to his shoulder—Jean-Marie, no doubt. As his senses came back, his eyes lingered long and wonderingly upon the huge old fire-place, where a handful of wood was burning, and in front of which sat a strange, lovely figure.

She wore a long robe of black velvet, quaint in style. The sleeves were wide and trimmed with costly lace; and there was a bit of the same yellow lace around the fair white throat. Down over this dead black dress floated an exquisite mass of long, waving hair; the hair that is golden in sunlight, and rare brown in the shade; the face was oval, with delicate, pearly skin, and short, red lips, and the eyes were hazel-brown, beneath dark and beautifully-pencilled eye-brows. Yet, with all its exquisite beauty, there was a curious want in the face; it was almost such a one as Undine's may have been before she gained her soul. She was sitting with her head resting upon her hand: but when the sick man spoke, she rose and came toward him.

"He has blue eyes," she murmured to herself, in the amazed tone of a discoverer. "I did not think they would be so handsome."

"I speak French," said he, unable to help a boyish blush at this remark.

"Very good," she said, blushing too, but not allowing herself to be disturbed. "I never saw blue eyes before; all the peasants have black ones. I thought you spoke only German. Are you a Prussian?"

"I am an Englishman, but my mother was French, and all my sympathies are with the French. My name is Henry Arthur Livingston. Have I not the honour of addressing the Baronne d'Orvâle?"

"I am Lucille d'Orvâle," she said, simply. "I am glad you came—you will be a companion for me. I am tired of this lonely château, with only Jean-Marie and Margot to talk to—except my pigeons. My good old gouvernante, Madame Deglonne, is gone. Her son is ill and she had to go to him."

"And they do not provide you with another!" he exclaimed, asking the question in sheer amazement.

"Do you mean my guardian—the man of business in Paris? He does not know. What would you? With the country devastated by this dreadful war, who is to let him know? He would not have time to think of me. And he has no power over me—he only sends the rents. I am my own mistress."

"Mam'selle, the supper is ready," said the voice of Margot from the door. But the Baronne shrugged her pretty shoulders.

"I will have it here, with monsieur," she said, tersely; and Margot disappeared.

"What did you say you were called?" began Lucille, curiously.

"My name is Harry (or, as you would call it, Henri) Livingston."

"Liveenstone," she said, stumbling over it. "It is too long; I shall call you Monsieur Henri. And you live in the strange country where the people are barbarians!"

"Englishmen are not barbarians, mademoiselle."

"But I tell you they are. Papa said it, and papa knew. He was a savant. Oh, he was so good and he knew so much."

Livingston smiled in the midst of his pain. "All of them, at least, are not," he said. "I for one."

He again recurred to his fancy of the enchanted castle. A creature so lonely, helpless, and singularly childlike he had never seen; she was the genuine princess of a fairy-tale.

But she proved herself enough like ordinary mortals to give him a cup of deliciously made coffee, which Margot brought in; and when he explained his inability to hold it because of his wounded shoulder, she gravely seated herself on a chair at his side, cup in hand.

"Never mind, I will give it to you from the spoon; I did so once to papa, when he was ill."

There was nothing for it but acquiescence. So Livingston submitted to have part of the coffee trickle down his neck without a murmur, and wondered whether Hebe had administered nectar to the gods in a like embarrassing manner.

Jacques was in a dazed condition; not only had he obtained entrance to the château in a very unexpected manner, but here was la petite Baronne actually helping m'sieu with her own hands, as beautiful as an angel, but one of those fearful D'Orvâles, nevertheless. "They say that madame's ghost walks here at night—the Madonna preserve us!" thought he. Jacques crossed himself devoutly, and included m'sieu in the sign, by way of foiling any bad spirits who might be hovering around.

But the traveller began to look very pale and exhausted, and Lucille wished him good night. Margot came in, very cross, and told Jean-Marie that the gentleman's bed was ready, and that he had better go to it.

In the morning Harry Livingston found himself too ill to move; the wound had been too long without attention, and his ride had aggravated it terribly. Jacques went over to St. Etienne, and brought from thence the only doctor that the little village could boast; but he proved equal to the emergency. Being too cautious to use many medicines, he confined himself to keeping down the fever which threatened Livingston; and nature, left to herself, brought the patient

through in safety in the course of a few days. The doctor's sister, a benevolent middle-aged dame, came over often, and gave much countenance to the young Baronne. After that came the days of convalescence; weary enough they would have been to the sick young man but for his little hostess.

She was at once the most fascinating, fairy-like vision that Livingston had ever seen. He had known very many beautiful women —the loveliest and best-bred of his own charming countrywomen— but they lacked the subtle, curious attraction of Lucille. She was such a child; all simplicity, unsophistication, and guileless innocence. Passion was unknown to her; love had never touched her breast. Knowing nothing of conventionalism, in her intercourse with Livingston she was free as she could have been with a brother, sitting by his sofa half the day, and talking with him by the hour together. Of her dead father she spoke in reverent, admiring terms; she gloried in his patriotism, and in his falling for France; but of actual love, even for him, Livingston half doubted whether she knew the meaning. All the sublime, heroic side of a woman's character seemed wanting; or else it slept: she was an elf, a fairy, a sprite— or, in less lover-like phrase, a careless, lovely child.

"Monsieur Henri," Lucille would call, standing under his window, when he began to get about, "come down and see me feed the pigeons. Jean-Marie has gone to the village, Margot is in her kitchen, Jacques sees to the horses—and for me, I am lonely. Hasten then." And Harry would progress down the long stairs as far as his half-restored strength would permit, to be met half-way by Lucille, who would insist upon aiding him with her slender arm.

All scenes were not so pleasant as this, however. Lucille would sometimes ask Livingston to tell her of his own home and country: and although his stories of it and of his life there seemed to hold a strange charm for her, she would manifest a curious jealousy of them. Let him look a trifle more tired than usual, and her lovely lips would curl in vexation; she would irritate him with suggestions that he was suffering from ennui and mal du pays, and threaten to leave him and never come back to the salon any more. And then Livingston would implore and coax her until he saw the usual half-sweet, half-arch smile come back to the lovely face, and a truce would be proclaimed between them.

But one memorable morning, when Lucille carried this rather far, Livingston adopted an entirely different line of tactics. That is, if he thought of tactics at all. Lucille announced that she had lessons to learn (she was always talking of the studies that the death of her governess had left incomplete), and that she must leave monsieur for the rest of the day. Upon which, to her great surprise, monsieur responded with stately courtesy that he should be pained to think of detaining her from her learned researches, and that he had the honour to wish Mademoiselle la Baronne a very good morning.

"*I* have wasted too much time upon you, Monsieur Henri," she cried, hotly. "I will not say to you, 'go—leave the château'—the D'Orvâles know not such inhospitality. But of my company you have had too much. Very well! You shall have no more of it until you come to bid good-bye before leaving for your belle pays, where you long to be. Open the door, monsieur, will you be so good?" And the little stately figure swept past him into the corridor, with cheeks aflame and lips apart.

He watched her go. Did he love her or hate her most? And which passion was it that prompted him to pick up from the marble floor, where her own little foot had crushed it, a blue gentian-flower dropped from her waistband, and to hide it carefully in his vest?

She did not come back. No: though he fretted and fumed and watched incessantly. A wearily long day he found it without her; and when Margot brought him his meal at noon, she reported that mademoiselle had shut herself in her little study in the east turret-chamber and would neither open the door nor come downstairs. Further dismayed questions on the part of Livingston only made Margot cross. He was fain to eat the food set before him, and tried to while away the afternoon with an old and much-worn copy of Sallust which he had picked up the day before. But he was still weak from the effect of his wound, and presently the words began to dance before his eyes, his head dropped forward on the table, and in a few moments he was asleep.

Two hours later he was awakened by a terrified whisper. "M'sieu, m'sieu, awake, for the love of heaven! They are here; they have surrounded the château; fly, m'sieu, while you can."

Livingston started up, to see the terrified face of Jacques bending over him. "They!—who?" demanded he, instinctively snatching his pistols from the case where they lay, already loaded.

"The Uhlans, m'sieu; a whole company of the devil's own brood," whispered Jacques, fiercely. "This way: quick!"

He caught hold of Livingston's arm to guide him down the dark passage to a back staircase; by which, gaining the kitchen, he hoped to escape. But he had hardly reached it, when Livingston stopped short.

"Hold a moment, Jacques," he whispered, hurriedly. "Wait for me here, five minutes, and then if you hear them coming, fly without me. I must see the Baronne."

Jacques wrung his hands. "What folly!" he cried, trying to detain him; "it is no time for adieux." But Livingston broke away from him, and vanished. "It is the accursed evil eye," muttered Jacques, crouching down on the stairs; "it is the ghastly presence of Madame the dead Baronne. This brave monsieur is bewitched! Blessed Madonna, grant that we escape safely! and I vow to give thee two wax-lights, and two for blessed St. Jean Baptiste."

Livingston turned to go up the turret-stair, one wild impulse in

his heart. His love, his little helpless darling! What! leave her here in the power of the Prussian troopers! Better die with his sword in his hand, defending her.

His hand touched the handle of the door of the turret-chamber. He rapped softly; there was no answer. He waited an instant; could she have left the room, and be, even now, a prisoner? The thought was agony; he tried the door with greater force—it gave way under his hand, and he crossed the threshold.

There was some light in the room; it came from a lamp which hung on a bracket on the wall. Directly beneath the light, on a small sofa, lay Lucille asleep. One little hand pressed the soft white cheek, which was, even yet, wet with tears; the golden hair lay in bright masses on her neck, and streamed over the dingy damask covering of the sofa—just the fairest, purest vision that man ever beheld, made all the fairer for her strange surroundings. With a noiseless step, Livingston crossed the floor and bent over her, lower, lower, till a tress of the bright hair touched his hand; the impulse had scarcely time to form itself into a thought, when a tender, passionate kiss fell gently on the lovely lips, and with a slight start, Lucille awoke.

"Henri, Henri!" she murmured softly, gazing up into the eyes bent upon her, "you have come to me—at last!"

At the touch of the great enchanter's wand the sleeping Princess had awakened; at Love's first kiss Undine had found her soul!

She quite awoke then, blushed violently, and rose up. Livingston clasped her hands and knelt at her feet. He told her in hurried words of the danger; he urged her to trust to his protection as she would to that of her father, and fly with him.

She was frightened. "Oh, take me away, Henri, to your own land. I am afraid no more of your ice and snow; you will be there and Lucille happy."

A distant noise betrayed the present danger. Livingston sprang to his feet so suddenly that pain wrung a faint groan from his lips.

"What is it, Henri?" she asked, in alarm. In a low, hasty whisper he begged of her to be still. Was there any place of concealment near? was——

Hark! a rushing step upon the stairs, voices, and hard raps upon the door. Livingston lifted his pistol; but quick as light, Lucille thrust him on the sofa behind her, and stood erect and pale, facing the intruders. Just for the moment her defender, utterly weak, could not rise.

"Hold!" she cried, as the fearless courage of her long line of warlike ancestors shone in every line of the girl's face, and made the foremost soldier pause, involuntarily. "Who *dares* enter the Château d'Orvâle unbidden, and with drawn sabres? Do the Prussians war with women?"

"Ma foi, mademoiselle, the Prussians may; but we do not," said a respectful voice in French, as a young officer forced his way through

the foremost of his men and doffed his plumed casquette to her with courtly grace. "This is the second time to-day that our helmets have gained us the unenviable distinction of being Prussians. We are a company of French cuirassiers en route—Henri, mon brave, is it thee?—what dost thee here?" broke off the officer in utter surprise. And, to the no less intense surprise of Lucille, she saw the Frenchman clasp him enthusiastically.

"Tranquillize thyself, mon ami," cried Harry, laughing. "I have a lame shoulder, Adolphe, and thou hast a veritable bear's hug. Let me present you to Mademoiselle la Baronne d'Orvâle; Mademoiselle, this is Captain Adolphe De Montaign, a life-long friend."

"I must implore pardon of Mademoiselle la Baronne for my intrusion," said the captain; "but we found the château entirely empty, and my men were anxious to explore it. I trust you will accept a thousand apologies; it only remains for me to take my leave of Mademoiselle."

"Monsieur is pardoned," said the lovely young châtelaine, extending her hand; "but surely you will not depart thus? Here is Monsieur Henri, who——" but a burning blush covered her face as she caught Livingston's eye, and she paused in a confusion that was all the deeper for its novelty.

Livingston came to her rescue and advised De Montaign to let his men bivouac at St. Etienne, while he stayed the night at the château. De Montaign accepted the invitation with alacrity; and when he retired to arrange his dress before supper, he laughingly assured Livingston that he should not at all object to a wound, provided so lovely a physician could fall to his lot.

But Livingston's wound proved no sinecure; for after the surrender of Bazaine at Metz, he found himself still too disabled to join his regiment. It promised to be rather a long affair of sickness, possibly through neglect of the wound at first, and Livingston resigned his commission.

He had to resign the hospitality of the château as well, for a fresh gouvernante came there for Mademoiselle, and enforced propriety. It did not matter, Livingston laughingly said; it would not be for long: once let him get strong, and then ——

And then, when that desirable end was accomplished, and he could stand straight and well again, a quiet ceremony was performed in the château chapel by the old curé of St. Etienne; and Henry Livingston carried away the Baronne from poor distracted France to his own domains in his own land.

They sometimes talk of going back to the château, where Jean-Marie and Margot keep guard and watch for them. But honest Jacques, in attendance on his master, shakes his head, and crosses himself at the bare idea of again venturing within the region of the evil eye.

D. V.

PARTED.

Through the same sunny valleys we have wandered,
O'er the same flowery meads,
Tending our flocks where crystal rills meandered
Among their whispering reeds.

But now our pathway at God's touch dividing,
That happy childhood o'er;
Thou 'neath the shadow of thy vines abiding,
Wilt listen as of yore

To the sweet songs of harvest gladness flowing,
Above the gathered sheaves,
And pluck the grapes in purple clusters glowing
Amid the vineyard leaves.

The kind good-night, the morning's happy greeting,
The loving smile and tone
Of kindred hearts around one bright hearth meeting,
Still, still are all thine own.

While far away where silver dews are falling
On alien woods and streams,
I too shall hear my home's glad voices calling,
But only in my dreams.

Oft shall my thoughts, like wandering birds returning
To leafy nests at night,
See those blue hills snow-capped and hoary, burning
In sunset's golden light.

But whether toiling up steep mountain passes,
With patient weary feet,
Or ankle deep amid the scented grasses,
And meadow blossoms sweet,

One path is ours, divided or together,
One hope, one promised rest,
One Guide to lead through storm or sunny weather,
E'en as He knoweth best.

J. I. L.

M. ELLEN EDWARDS. J. SWAIN.

GRACE'S VISITOR.

THE ARGOSY.

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GABRIEL'S APPOINTMENT.

CHAPTER XXXI.

HOW GRACE PYNE WENT TO LONDON.

IF anyone had told Alice Kerr, in one of her recent pensive moods, how much she would enjoy her share in the wedding tour of Gabriel and Edith, she would probably have replied, that of course there was always something to interest an artist in Continental travelling; and to see two such friends happy ought to be happiness enough, without expecting anything of the kind for yourself. That her own portion would in the smallest degree approach theirs, was, by the circumstances of the case, simply impossible. The Wind, poor thing! had but to die—or, if that were inconvenient, at any rate to confine itself to a certain breezy cheerfulness, that would set off to advantage the brightness and fragrance of sunbeam and rose. If it could do that, it asked for nothing more.

But the wisdom and experience of seventeen, however profound and infallible, is liable to the small drawback of suddenly and entirely changing its mind; and the homeward journey, when she thought it over, was in itself without a fault—it was the happiest time she had ever known—and this, as she was almost ashamed to confess, though Edith was unwell, and Gabriel absorbed in attending upon her.

It had been found impracticable to hurry their return, as they had intended at first; in spite of all her efforts, Edith's nerves could not recover from the shock they had received, and loss of sleep and appetite made her often unable to travel, even when all was arranged. They proceeded, therefore, in a most leisurely manner, of which Alice reaped the benefit; for Hartley Carroll devoted himself to her amusement, and was resolved, he said, that she should feel for the rest of her life what a privilege it was to travel with such a man as himself.

Throwing aside, not only his business cares, but his home habits, his delight was to study in private every guide-book within his reach, and the instant they reached a place to seize upon Alice, and carry her off sight-seeing—bewildering her both by his bodily activity and the amazing stores of his information. It must be confessed that trusting to his memory sometimes proved a snare, and that Alice happening to have read the guide-book first, detected the blunder and the authority; but Hartley was never at a loss, and was just as ready with date, history, and critique, when he knew nothing about the matter as when he had it all by heart. In fact, he was more self-satisfied than ever on such occasions; stoutly maintaining, in defiance of argument, that it required much more intellect to invent your own knowledge than to take it from others second-hand.

His kindness and good humour made him a most agreeable companion, and she was just at the age to think nothing could be more delightful than to be for hours at a time on her feet, continually rushing from one object of interest to another, snatching refreshment in all sorts of odd places, and, as a rule, always within a hair's-breadth of missing every train. It was novelty, excitement, and frolic all in one, and such as she had never enjoyed before; but this was only the surface of her happiness. That which kept her spirits sparkling, as they only can sparkle in youth, and on which she looked back afterwards with such a thrill of pleasure, was of a quieter and gentler kind. Even in the midst of his gaiety Hartley Carroll would sometimes flag, especially after reading the papers; or it might happen that Gabriel or Edith wanted him to talk over their letters, or their plans for the autumn and winter; and then she was left, as a matter of course, to the attendance of Erasmus Martin. And Erasmus Martin, when alone with her, was a different being from that which he usually appeared. Only Gabriel besides had seen the tenderness that lay hidden beneath his reserve; but even he had never seen him as Alice now saw—for between soldier and hunter there was so much in common, that the superiority of education was no bar to the equality of friendship; indeed, in many of the qualities that their wild life required, the experience of the woods sometimes gave Martin the lead. Among works of art, and historical antiquities, he felt himself like an ignorant child, and the simplicity of his ignorance—so unlike that of a man who knows he ought to know a great deal more, and tries to look as if he had only forgotten it—made it wonderfully interesting to be his teacher. Scraps of architectural, ecclesiastical, and mediæval information, rummaged out by Alice from all her miscellaneous stores of reading and memory, were gathered and treasured by the neophyte with a confident belief in his oracle, that stimulated her powers of mind as much as Hartley's ciceroneship exercised those of her body. And when they were not actually engaged with the business of travelling, but were resting quietly in the evening, it sometimes happened that they were alone

together, and conversation, if less instructive, would become more personal and intimate. Alice found herself talking of her father—his genius, his struggles, his latter days of feebleness; of the sharp period that followed his death, when she was fighting single-handed against poverty and fraud; till his glowing sympathy with her troubles reminded her that she was becoming egotistical, and she would set herself to draw out his story in return.

And to her he would tell what Gabriel had only guessed at; to her he gradually, and almost unawares, entrusted the sorrow that always lay at the bottom of his heart—the belief that there was something in the past which must for ever bar him out from society. He too spoke of his father now, and to such pitying ears could do it without fear of misconstruction. Alice's own experience was a bond of union between them on that subject; and she felt almost frantic with the conviction that, do what she might, she should never be able to show the world all he could be at his best—what she knew he had sometimes been. And this he understood, and it won his confidence to a degree that surprised himself.

It was the last evening of the tour, of which Amiens was the final stage, and they were staying in a good, though comparatively quiet hotel, whence they were to start early the next day. In looking over her drawings, before packing them up, Alice came upon an outlined design of the "Knight, Squire, and Yeoman"—where even Martin's unpractised eye detected sufficient likeness to make him curious about its meaning. Rather flurried by reminiscences, Alice dilated on the subject of Chivalry, making it appear that the extra care and pains bestowed on the delineation of the knight was owing to the dignity of his position—one equal to princes; nay, till the princes had won their degree, above them, as they were the foremost to acknowledge; a position she had involuntarily bestowed on Mr. Bruce on first acquaintance, because it was peculiarly the province of the true knight to help the helpless and distressed, especially friendless women. True knighthood did not imply riches—but it meant courage, generosity, honour, truth—all that was noble and good.

Martin nodded his head approvingly; it was just Mr. Bruce's character. But what of the squire? That he had a right to ask.

The squire, she told him, collecting all her courage as she did so, was one who was learning all the duties and graces of the knightly character—sometimes even excelled the knights themselves—but his special duty was to serve the one he followed—obey, defend, die for him, if necessary—or if that were not required, he was always on the watch for some glorious opportunity of distinguishing himself, and so winning his spurs. And spurs gloriously won were sometimes buckled on his heels by noble ladies, who considered it an honour to wait on so brave a man; and she described, as best she could, the vigil by the armour, the ceremony of the accolade, and all the brilliant surroundings with which books and pictures stored her imagination,

speaking so enthusiastically that she did not observe at first how earnestly he was looking at her the while. When she did, her flow of discourse came abruptly to a close, and she found it was time for her to go and see about packing up.

"Wait a minute," said Martin, standing quietly between her and the door, "I want to ask you one thing. In those times you speak of, supposing one of these gentlemen had lost his position—perhaps not by his own fault—was there any way open for him to win it back?"

"Yes, there were the pilgrimages; and above all, the Crusades—fighting for the Holy Land, you know. If a man wore the Cross on his shoulder, and did his duty by it, he was considered to have begun his life afresh, as it were, and the old things were not brought up against him."

Alice was not quite sure, as she said this, whether her history were correct or not; but his eyes looked so intensely earnest that she hardly knew what she was saying.

"It sounds like what I have heard Mr. Forrest say," said Martin.

"Well, yes; as an allegory, it holds good still, I suppose. But if you take it in that light, you had better ask him about it."

"Thank you—for this advice, and for all you have taught me."

He was holding the door open for her to pass, and as he said this, bent his head respectfully; upon which she held out her hand. The grip that he gave it might, perhaps, have been the cause, not only of the flush in her cheeks when she reached her own room, but of the packing being done in such defiance of all orthodox rules, that it was fortunate for her credit that the Custom-house let her trunk pass unopened.

Hartley, who had left them at Amiens, was waiting at the Victoria station to receive them, and seemingly in the highest spirits. A few words passed between him and Gabriel, as Alice noticed, but they could not have been very important, or Mr. Carroll would never have said the ridiculous things he did say as they drove home; declaring that there were half-a-dozen reporters, and three of our own artists, watching for their arrival, and that having misled them as to the individuals they sought, Edith and Alice would appear in the next week's illustrated papers, the one in the likeness of a French actress, and the other of an Irish cook. The cook was, he thought, the handsomer of the two, but that he couldn't help.

"Such crowds of people want to meet you at parties, and ask for your photographs, autographs, and hair, that I have quite made up my mind I can't stand it any longer, and so I have let my house."

"Nonsense," said Edith, smiling.

"Oh, you may call it so, if you are particular as to terms, but there is the fact. A rich American, attracted, no doubt, by the romance of the story, has made a splendid offer for it, on condition he may come in next week; so Clare has packed a carpet-bag—you

know how little luggage she ever wants—we never have to pay more than twice the amount of our railway fares—and if Edith is very pressing, she means to go down with her to Lowlevels, and make her own butter, which is not quite so vulgar as earning your own bread."

All exclaimed, but he persisted in his story. And when Tiny, who met them with open arms, was appealed to for explanation, she only turned gravely round and enquired what was his last reason for their move, as every day she heard a fresh one. Oh, yes; the house was let, and the Americans were coming in for a year, she was told; and she hoped they would like the trouble of it; for her part, she was glad it would be so soon off her mind. There was a feeling of savage freedom about it that was quite exhilarating. She meant to take a lesson or two from the Ironhand in the mysteries of camping out and gun-loading, in case they went about with a tent, or a white-tilted waggon.

"I was always charmed with that bit of 'Lavengro,' when he bought the tinker's cart, and made tea at the fire in the little dell: so now, perhaps, I shall enjoy it myself."

"If tinkering will make you happy, I may be able to indulge you," muttered Hartley, with a smile at Gabriel, which Alice thought rather too significant, and which Bruce only answered by a slight shake of the head.

If all this was meant to spare Edith's nerves, it was done under a mistaken idea of her feelings on the subject. When she was alone with her sister, she invited her to be open; assuring her that if any bad news were hanging over them, she should be all the better able to bear her share for knowing it at once.

"My dear," said Tiny, with affected solemnity, "all I know is, we find it so expensive to have no money that we are resolved in future to have as much as possible; and any nation, race, or tribe, who may offer us any, will meet with a brother's welcome. As to my going down with you that is only a joke."

"No, indeed, I will not be joked in that fashion. You have invited yourself, and I hold you to it."

"Very well. Then you see we have very little time to spare, for if you are known to be in town, wild horses will not keep people from rushing down upon you and Alice. My darling, what a scene it must have been—and for you too, who always detested the very sight of gun or pistol. You don't really think they meant to kill him?"

"No; from what we were told, it seemed that their object was to frighten and rob us, though what might have been the consequence of resistance we cannot say. I have behaved very badly about it, and made poor Gabriel wretched—but I had no idea I was such a coward. Thank God, we are safe in England! I am brave enough now."

"Yes, there is a comfortable valour about being safe that is worth all the glory in the world. But what made Helen behave so oddly as she seems to have done?"

"She resented the suspicion thrown on the courier of Sir Jesse's recommending; and Burlington seriously offended Gabriel by some sarcastic remarks on Martin. It was fortunate we parted company, for your husband and mine were both getting angry."

"I hope they were, with all my heart. I would not own mine if he endured any insinuations against that brave fellow. What have you done with him and his waif, Bill Close?"

"They went off to St. Edmund's at once. I almost envied Martin that surprise for Mr. Forrest. I believe the surprise to himself, when he saw what value was set at the Mission on such a specimen as Bill Close, was quite a new revelation to his understanding."

"Humph!" said Mrs. Carroll, "I am not surprised at that, for it is quite beyond mine."

Mrs. Bruce was not far wrong in her estimate of the welcome that awaited Martin and his charge. When Bill Close, so disguised by the neat suit of clothes his protectors had given him, that his old tempters would hardly have known him, showed his sunburnt, freckled face, all glowing with a mixture of delight and shame, at the door of the well-known parlour, into which he was pushed by the Ironhand, the good priest's start of joy was quite sufficient evidence of the value he set on the gift brought him from Italy. Audacious as the boy was, it upset him completely; and he could only blubber out a broken sentence or two which nobody quite heard, but which David Forrest intuitively understood. There was not much said on either side; a few fatherly words of very gentle rebuke and hearty forgiveness were all he would allow himself now; and then Bill was sent down to be regaled by Mrs. Honest and Sally on the best the larder contained, and, it is much to be feared, to be treated more like a hero than a penitent. And sincere as his penitence had been, it was not in human nature, at his age, to resist the temptation of playing the gallant seaman ashore on leave, and dilating on his own cleverness in detecting the plot, and his prowess in helping the gentlemen to "weather" the thieves. Indeed, he talked much more freely on the subject than, as he had been cautioned, would be prudent or safe; but then, what harm could there be in boasting to Mrs. Honest how he had made out Tonio in spite of his dress, and kept guard at the back of the carriage, with the brigand's own gun, ready to blow him into little bits if he had given chase? The gentlemen had all praised him for a smart chap, and promised to do him a good turn, and he had had quite enough of the tar-brush, thankee, and would just like to be 'prenticed to a gunsmith—that he should.

All this, and a great deal more, was listened to without contradiction, for who was there to contradict him? Sally believed every word, and laid it all up to be repeated among her own particular friends.

She had her means of enjoying society, let Mrs. Honest be as busy or as watchful as she pleased. However particular might be the job given her to do, and strict the injunctions not to stir till it was done, so surely as the hour arrived when it suited Sally to slip out for a gossip, was she missing from her post—one of her favourite resorts being the ham and beef shop of granny Hughes; where, as a purveyor of news and carrier of messages, she generally found a welcome.

To this bower of refreshment for body and mind, she accordingly betook herself in the course of the following morning, having been sent on an errand requiring punctuality and despatch. Finding the shop too full for private conversation, she took up a favourable position close to her friend Liza, where she could, unobserved herself, observe all the customers, and hear what was said. The weather was hot, and granny Hughes very snappish, but that only added to the amusement of the scene; and as she must be scolded when she got back, the longer she put off going the better. A fierce argument over a doubtful sixpence between granny and a hard-featured, untidy woman, having been at last compromised by 'Liza's diplomacy, the latter asked a friendly question, which led to a long dismal story about one child being in hospital, quite useless, not earning a farthing, and the other so undutiful and greedy, she didn't care what her mother went without, so long as the spoilt girleen got what she cried for—not that she'd cry for anything very long—and the burying would all fall upon her shoulders, and what they should do, she couldn't tell, unless Tonio came back with a pot of money, as he had promised he would: he had spent enough of Caterina's, had Tonio, and it was high time he paid some of it back. A great deal more was said to the same effect, in the middle of which, 'Liza heard a small voice saying in her ear, "Tonio's been found out, and nearly blown into little bits."

Nobody else overheard this piece of news; and a *bonnebouche* of fat ham dexterously administered on the spot, prevented its being repeated. By the time Sally's mouth was empty, the Irishwoman had departed; and 'Liza, finding a favourable opportunity, whisked her small visitor into the little back parlour.

"Now then, Sally," she said, "let's hear all about it, and we'll see if we can't find a bit of beef to match the ham."

It was two or three hours later, during a temporary lull of business, that, having seen her grandmother composing herself for her after-dinner nap, 'Liza washed her hands and face, tied on a cleaner apron, and then busied herself in arranging a tray of refreshments, with more regard to nicety of appearance than she would have thought necessary for themselves. With this she ascended the dark, dirty staircase, till she reached the top of the house. A tap of her hand at a garret-door being answered by another within, a key was turned, and she was admitted into the close, bare chamber by Grace Pyne.

It is not after long perseverance in honesty and self-denial that

human nature is liable to a sudden leap into evil; and we have no fears on the subject of her being suspected by the reader, any more than by her sister Lucy. Nevertheless, she was at this moment in hiding, and had suffered voluntary imprisonment long enough in that stifling atmosphere to give her a worn and weary aspect, with her heavy eyelids, parched lips, and feverish hands—a faint, hopeless longing for air and coolness making her almost loathe the sight of the food she needed so much, so that only gratitude for her rough friend's kindness enabled her to accept it as it was meant.

Medland's story was, on the whole, correct. The handkerchief Grace had lent Darch Williams was a token she could not mistake; and, dreading she knew not what, she obeyed his summons, and spent the interval in looking for him, which he was employing with a dexterity peculiarly his own. We may as well explain at once that his smooth speeches and promises to Bilson had gained that worthy person over as a confederate; and when the train came up, and Grace returned to her post, Bilson was there, and begged her assistance in carrying the box to the carriage. After delivering the precious deposit to Mrs. Salisbury, Grace had just turned away, when something scarlet caught her eye for an instant, and then—yes, she knew the figure of the man in the large cloak who was trying to open the stiff door of a third class carriage, and in the effort had uncovered a box that he carried under one arm—and that box, so exactly like the other, and with the scarlet ribbon.

She saw it all in a moment—perhaps one of the most terrible she could have known.

The warning snort of the engine had been given, the guard was fastening the doors, and Darch Williams, alone in the carriage he had entered, was concealing his prize with his cloak, when she sprang upon the step and looked in.

"It is you! Darch! Darch! for the love of God, give me that box! There is just time—one minute, and it will be too late! I know it—I can swear to it—give it up, or you are lost!"

He had turned pale when he first saw her; but he reddened now, though he had the self-command to reply quietly, "My girl, if you will betray me, I can't help it—but you must be quick in lifting it out."

She sprang into the carriage, and he instantly seized her by the wrist, and forced her into a seat.

"You have done it now," his voice hissed in her ear: "and if you say a word, or move a finger ——"

She heard no more—she made one effort to reach the window, and then lost consciousness. The guard, as he shut the door, only noticed that the young woman seemed to be taken bad, but as her friend was looking after her, it was no affair of his.

The first thing she understood afterwards was the sound of her companion's voice, addressing an official who had come to look at their tickets. His wife, he was explaining, had been so hurried at

Longmorton that she had not time to take her ticket—here was the money; would he get her one to London? There was some demur, but an extra shilling removed the difficulty, and by the time Grace's brain was clear again, they were out of the Exeter station.

She sat up, breathing short, and conscious of an almost stupefying headache that threatened to lay her prostrate, when she wanted all her strength. And when she recollected what had happened, and saw in what position she was placed, it is not surprising that her nerves gave way. His cruelty, as she felt it to be, was too hard to bear, and she wept so bitterly that he was fain to assume an apologetic tone, and assure her he meant no harm. Things looked ugly, no doubt, but as he had always warned her, she must trust him against appearances, and she would find him true to her to the last. He had stopped her blabbing for both their sakes, because to be taken up now would be ruin, and he had gone too far to turn back. If she tried, after all, to betray him, he had only one word to say about that matter; he would not hurt a hair of her head, and that she knew—but he held his own life so cheap that it would make no odds whether he chanced a jump down the embankment, or a shot with his revolver. She must make up her mind to have his blood on her head, for no man should take him alive, with her to be brought as a witness against him.

She saw his determination in his eyes, and that argument would be thrown away; the hope she had clung to for so many years seemed dying out of her heart. "You are very cruel," she said, in a low, trembling voice—"you know I cannot, even to save myself, *cannot* give you up to justice; I only tried to save you from the wickedness—I would have saved you, if you had listened. Now you have robbed me, as well as that good, kind old lady—robbed me of my all, and I must bear it, but you must take the consequences. From this day it is all over between us—the old time is dead and buried—you are nothing to me, nor I to you; and if God only gives me the help he has given to poor weak women before now, even yet I may hinder what you are doing, and give back what you are taking away!"

All his endeavours after this to conciliate her, even to make her speak, were fruitless. She preserved a passive silence for the rest of the journey; and, finding her resolute, he at last desisted. His doubts, as to what she meant to do on arriving at the station, were relieved when he found that she was as anxious to avoid notice as he could be; and that she allowed him to put her into a metropolitan carriage without remonstrance, and enter it after her. They went to the city together, and when they left the railway, walked on through several streets, as if their plans had been talked over beforehand.

Both, in fact, knew that there was but one hiding-place open to them. And that was the house of granny Hughes.

CHAPTER XXXII.

MR. JONES RECEIVES A VISITOR.

THE friends of Mr. Jones were too experienced to be easily startled. Nevertheless, it was with evident disfavour that they heard what he had been doing, and 'Liza in particular was hot in her indignation at such treatment of that good, honest, industrious creature, Grace Pyne. He might be satisfied with playing his tricks himself; but to drag a poor dear soul into it against her will, and do your best to ruin her good name for life—no man that was a man would dream of such a thing; and 'Liza was only surprised that her grandmother didn't tell him, then and there, that the sooner he made himself scarce the better she should be pleased.

Perhaps her experience of the world had made Mrs. Hughes cynical, for she was less demonstrative towards Grace than her young descendant; but she shook her head over Darch's booty, and pronounced it much too dangerous for her to meddle with. "To have it found here would just ruin us all. Don't you come nigh the place till you've got rid of it; do you hear? As for Grace Pyne, if she'll be content with what we can give her, she's welcome. 'Liza can see to her; I'm too old to be trotting up and down stairs; and let me tell you, it will not be safe for her to show her face here, where she is so well known. She must keep dark for a bit, till we can get her away."

They talked of her, and arranged for her, with little reference to herself, for she was scarcely in a state of mind or body to have a voice in the matter. To do Darch Williams justice, he was by this time heartily sorry for her, and would gladly have undone his day's work if he could. He took all 'Liza's rebukes in good part, and begged her to take care of his poor girl, promising ample reward. But 'Liza scoffed at the idea of accepting any.

"I ain't half as particular as she—nothing like it. I don't know half as much, nor I can't take to out-and-out goodness, week days as well as Sundays, while I've granny and the shop to see to. But I will say this—if any man had done this to me, I'd cut my hand off sooner than let him touch it again. Ah, you may look as you please, but it's my belief that you've been and done it, and lost such a wife as you won't find anywhere else in a hurry."

Her friendship was of a rough description, but it was of the genuine stamp: as poor Grace found during those long, trying days of confinement which she had since endured in that stifling garret, keeping the door locked against every other visitor, and beguiling the time with needlework in payment for her board—the only payment her protectors would accept.

She had been busy over a dress for 'Liza, when the latter knocked at the door; and while she was trying to swallow the food so kindly

pressed upon her, the eyes of her friend turned eagerly towards the nearly finished work.

"I wish I was as clever as you, Grace dear, or as good, either, for that matter. I wonder how it would feel, just for a change."

"You are very good to me," said Grace, sighing, and gently pushing away her plate. She had done her utmost, but to eat was impossible. 'Liza watched her with deep concern.

"This won't do much longer," she said. "You can't go on like this; and something will turn up soon out of the news I've heard today. You know Tonio, that Caterina is so proud of, though her mother ain't? He got a job as courier, and it was to be such a good one that they were to marry when he came back. Well, it seems he had another job in hand as well, which it's to be hoped Caterina knowed nothing about—though somebody did, or they couldn't have given notice. Anyhow the gentlemen got a hint that mischief was brewing, and went off after him, and Tonio had to give up his place all in a hurry, and where he went to nobody knows; but I fancy we shall not be long before we have news of him."

"But who told you this? Have you seen Caterina?"

"No: her mother was here this morning, but she didn't seem to know. It was little Sally from the parson's told me: and I thinks to myself directly, this will be news for Darch. What? Didn't you know that them two has been friends all along, and hand-and-glove together in a dozen tricks, none of which ever came to good? Why, it was Tonio as helped Darch to follow Mr. Bruce in a French steamer when he and his mates gave him the slip at Sydney; and they've been carrying on their game, one up, another down, ever since, playing into each other's hands, with the help of one or two more. I know all about it, bless you, from my George, as belongs to that boat they took off Bill Close in so neatly that nobody could guess where he'd gone. George whispered to me that Bill was all right; and so he was, for he's come back as bold as brass, and is to be 'prenticed by the gentlemen for doing them a good turn. But he'll have to take care of himself now, for Tonio will never forgive him, and them foreigners is awful for remembering a grudge."

We have given 'Liza's story as nearly in her own language as we can. The vernacular of her district is not easy to spell, or to render exactly; and closer accuracy may be dispensed with. The purport of her words was all that Grace attended to, and very terrible did that prove to be when 'Liza, on being further questioned, communicated in confidence all that George had confided to her, partly from his own knowledge, partly from what he surmised.

"You're not to go thinking now, Grace dear, that George is a bad fellow. He would like to make an honest living if he could get clear of his mates. One leads another on, and they can't stand up against the whole lot; but I can tell you there's many on them thinks a deal more of what's good than they used, since they had the Mission gen-

tleman looking after them, and lending of them books, and holding services on board—George come in for one, and he said he'd never forget it. I'll make him talk to you when he comes home, and you shall see what he says, and tell me if he ain't a good fellow at heart, though he's not had much schooling. *He'd* no hand in the fire, you know, and nearly quarrelled with Darch and Tonio about it: but they came over him somehow, because they were short of hands."

"Make him leave them, 'Liza. If he wants to do better, help him all you can. Go to Mr. Forrest yourself, and get George to go too. Tell him everything as a friend, ask his advice, and start afresh, both of you, with his blessing. You don't know how different your life will feel when you are working *with* God and His Church, and not against them. There's comfort laid up in all sorts of places against the day of trouble for them that follow the Lord in His own way, and have Him on board in the bad weather, even though He seems to be asleep. Sure, 'Liza dear, to go no further than my own self, if it weren't for His being close to me, I could have laid me down on this floor and died any hour of the day and night that I've been here. But I haven't despaired yet, and I won't. There's no more happiness for me in this world; but I may be able to hinder wrong being done, and that gives me something to live for."

'Liza looked at her with a puzzled admiration. "I do believe it's true what granny says—there'll be no luck to any of their games so long as you are praying dead against them. I'm afraid George would never stand that."

The sound of her grandmother's shrill voice, summoning her from below, cut short the answer she would have received, and, promising to return as soon as she could, she ran down stairs. About a quarter of an hour later, a stealthy tap on the door startled Grace from a reverie, and was followed by a cautious whisper: "Miss Pyne, my dear, be you there?"

Grace held her breath, and listened in doubt and perplexity. The whisper came again: "Miss Pyne, I've a message to give you—from a friend—one you know well, my dear. It's from Mr. Martin—most perticlar, Miss Pyne—he's dying, and wants to see you."

Grace opened the door; Mrs. Dennis stood there, curtseying, and radiant with affectionate smiles.

"You'll excuse the liberty, I know, Miss Pyne, but the poor dear old gentleman made such a point of it, I couldn't help saying I'd try and bring you word; and if so be as you'll put on my cloak and bonnet (and proud I'll be to lend them to you), why no one will know you; only you must slip out at the back, for the shop is full of people."

"How long has he been ill?" asked Grace.

"How long? Oh, then, I can't say exactly, but he's took terrible bad, poor old gentleman, and you must be quick to find him alive. Step across here into my room, and you shall have anything of mine

you like. It ain't the first time I've helped a body in trouble, and I'll be bound it won't be the last."

It may just be explained at once that the severe illness of old Martin was a harmless fiction on the good woman's part, used as a means of winning a reward. She had been for some little time a lodger of granny Hughes, and, in spite of all precautions, had guessed who the new inmate must be. Her object now was to get her out of the house unobserved by 'Liza; and Grace, after a little hesitation, decided to run the risk.

Besides her large cloak, Mrs. Dennis's stores supplied her with a rusty crape veil, and with this drawn closely over her face, there was little fear of her being recognised. On arriving at the well-known lodging-house, however, she was rather startled to find a gentleman waiting to receive and accompany her upstairs; nor was she much reassured by his explanation that he was Mr. Martin's solicitor. It sounded like the knell of her old friend, and she could hardly find voice to ask how he was?

"Better, but very anxious to see you," was the answer, and Mr. Plummer mounted the staircase with pleased alacrity, thrusting his head into the old man's apartment to announce that he had succeeded at last in carrying out his wishes. Here was Miss Pyne.

"Grace?" repeated a voice, very unlike that of weakness and age; and as Grace crossed the threshold her hand was warmly grasped by that of the younger Erasmus. She hardly knew what she was doing, and the tears came so fast that she could not see, but she felt that she was placed in a chair, and old Martin's withered fingers were clasped on hers, while his lips murmured words of thanksgiving.

The hunter's dexterous fingers released her from the voluminous cloak in which she was half stifled, and threw back the black veil.

"You are with friends, Grace," he said kindly, "and I am quite as sure as your sister Lucy is that *you*, at any rate, have no cause to hide your face."

"*That* we are all prepared to maintain," said Mr. Plummer. "Though circumstances may arise to make concealment prudent, and afford excuse for a trifling artifice—which Miss Pyne will forgive our employing to procure her visit. I have taken the liberty, my dear sir, of securing your door, so that we are safe from any intrusion, and can get to business when this good young woman has composed her amiable feelings."

"I am composed—I am ready," said Grace, recovering herself by a powerful effort. "I am thankful to find you are not ill, Mr. Martin; but you don't know what you have done in bringing me here. If you have any pity you will not ask me—I cannot—I must not."

The hunter's voice, softened by unusual emotion, interrupted her, though not unkindly.

"Grace, do you remember my promise?"

"Yes, sir, and have blessed you ever since."

"Do you believe I would keep it?"

"As I would myself, sir."

"Then we shall soon come to an understanding. I want you to do what no one else can—to bring me face to face with Darch Williams."

There had been a violent thunderstorm; one of those tremendous deluges of hail and rain which from time to time break over London, relieving its burning brain and throbbing heart, to an extent that compensates for a considerable amount of damage. Gardens and conservatories suffer loss; but streets are purified, and fevers are washed away; and those to whom change of air and country freshness are only golden dreams rejoice in a cooler atmosphere, as in renovated life.

The worst of the storm was over, though the rain was falling heavily still; and passengers on the railways that run over the streets of the City could see it rushing in streams off many a roof that looked in pressing need of such cleansing service. In one of the dingiest of these, the occupant of a large attic had just opened his grimy casement, to breathe the purer air for a moment; but the damp, striking on his irritable lungs, compelled him to close it again, and retreat from the perilous luxury, struggling against the cough which day and night was now his tormentor. A longer paroxysm than usual left him in a state of exhaustion, from which he rose up at last, wiping his forehead, and sighing in utter weariness of body and mind, "What can a fellow do without rest?"

If rest were what Darch Williams wanted, it was not because he did not earn it; there were evident tokens about the room of laborious occupation. A small forge occupied one corner, and a blow-pipe, and several tools belonging to his craft, showed signs of being recently used. In his younger days, the work on which he was employed would have been accomplished in half the time he had already consumed in beginning it; now, however, he was not only hindered by his cough, but by the pain and swelling of his hand and wrist, still suffering from Joel's gripe. Sleep was impossible without opiates, and these left him fevered and wretched to a degree that exceeded everything he had ever experienced in his life. Again and again he thought of Grace, and how she would have tended and cared for him, and cursed his own folly in having flung away a heart that had proved itself so true; and then, with a sudden revulsion of feeling, gnashed his teeth with rage against her for turning against him in the hour of need.

"But I'll be even with her," he muttered, as if trying to find comfort by planning the misery of others. "If she thinks I shall come round, and play the penitent, she'll find herself mistaken. I'll carry this job cleverly through. I will—if I die for it; and if I live, it shall be to enjoy what I have gained, out of sight and reach of

everybody that I ever knew. Let me get my revenge first, and make this respectable gentleman pay for his little commission—and then I'll off to the Cape, and try the diamond fields. I know a dodge or two that will be worth hundreds out there, only a man must have a steady hand to back them, and mine shakes like a child's."

And with that his thoughts took so evil a complexion that we cannot attempt to portray them, any more than to repeat the words with which he and such as he would garnish their conversation. The relief, if such he found it, was very short, and he had already cast a wistful eye at the truckle bed in the corner opposite the forge—wondering whether his state of exhaustion would give him an hour's sleep—when all prospect of such a comfort was effectually dispersed by a signal from without—five taps on the door, the two last given rapidly, like a double knock.

With a sudden flush on his face, as of unexpected hope, Darch Williams moved to the door, and opened it cautiously—too cautiously for the person outside, who at once pushed his way in, muttering something uncomplimentary towards English weather, and English people in general. Tonio.

Wet? yes, indeed, he was wet, and chilled to the bone; and his chattering teeth confirmed the statement. His rough sailor's dress was torn and dripping with the heavy rain, and his feet were almost bare—a pair of tattered shoes being their sole defence. Anything less resembling the smart courier who had started with Mr. Ford and his sister could scarcely have been imagined: but there was something about his manner, a half-suppressed surliness, ready to become passion on the smallest pretence, that struck his confederate even more than his forlorn aspect. Darch asked no questions; but, having secured the door, hastened to revive the embers of his forge, and prepare a corner of his table for such a meal as his stores afforded; then producing a change of clothes, hung up the soaking rags to dry; attentions which the other received as a matter of course, without abating a jot of his sullen deportment. Indeed, as he hung over the glowing coals, and wrung the wet out of his hair, Tonio's dark countenance seemed to grow darker still, and his brown hand clenched itself more than once, as if grasping the throat of an imaginary foe. But he said nothing, and Darch was content to bide his time.

A hearty meal, and copious draughts of ale and brandy, in some degree softened the new comer's mood, and he began to press his host to join him, as of old; but the latter shook his head. That sort of thing was poison to him now—his cough was his master, and forbade all such comfort. It was time he had a comrade to back him, for he was nearly done up. Now Tonio was come, he might get a little rest. To which remark Tonio made reply, that rest was the last thing any of them need look for at present; he himself had had none for several days and nights, and been nearly drowned

into the bargain; and unless he was much mistaken, worse things were still in store. The only objects worth living for under the circumstances were, in his opinion, plunder and revenge. The first he hoped Wily would help him to—the second he would provide for himself.

Had he brought nothing back with him then, after all? Nothing. Their scheme had been blown upon; and, though he had managed to come off unscathed, all he had made by the trip had been lost on the way home—their boat being cut in two by a steamer, and two of the crew lost. He and three others were picked up, and had only just landed in the state he had appeared in—penniless and in rags. Who had betrayed them he could not say, though he meant to find out. He had done all that man could do, to win; everything was going on velvet; the men he had engaged knew how to play their parts so well that if they had succeeded none of them would have been suspected, and the whole would have been laid to the account of the brigands. One of them was to lie in wait with a loaded gun, and the other two to surprise Mr. Bruce, and warn him that if he resisted, the lady would be fired at—a threat which must have led to his giving up all he had about him. It appeared that the fools had made a blunder, and took the young lady for Mrs. Bruce, who all the while was watching them; and it was her doing that they failed at first—the arrival of the others was owing to treachery at home—that mystery was yet to be explained. But neither of those who had crossed his plans did he mean to leave unpaid.

"The fair bride is to live at Lowlevels, I understand. We shall meet again there; it will not be the first lady I have done myself the honour of waiting upon, though not exactly invited."

"You seem to have muddled the whole affair in the clumsiest way," growled Mr. Jones. "I wish I had been there, with such a chance as you had, and threw away."

Tonio strongly doubted whether his friend's cleverness would have been much beyond his own; judging by the past, there were no proofs of his always succeeding. His own part had been one of great difficulty, and but for the address with which he had won the Frenchwoman to his side, he could hardly have played it at all. He had private warning that the police suspected him, and had just time to resign his situation, and escape on board their comrades' boat—an unlucky move, as it turned out, as he lost all his baggage and money.

"We must come upon the Padrone for a supply," he added, "or you must hand over some of your winnings, Wily."

"You don't expect *he* will pay you for what you have not done, I should think. *I* have not settled with him yet, but what I can do for you I will, to keep you going. Here is as much as I can spare."

"That all you can do? Come, come, friend—I know better. You have your prize still in your hand, and you think to keep it

all to yourself. I tell you that won't do. I stand to lose as much as you do, and I'll have my share of the profits. What have you got all your tools out for, if you are doing nothing?"

The occupiers of the story below, being a large, busy family themselves, were too well accustomed to noises of all sorts to be easily disturbed; but they did think the workman overhead must have been indulging rather freely, to tumble over his furniture as he seemed to be doing. Perhaps one of his mates might be quarrelling with him—not at all unlikely—indeed, one of the girls had seen a sailor go up some little time ago. Well, they must settle it their own way. And the mother of the family, with a significant gesture, stopped a thin, pale-faced boy, who was creeping to the door, imperatively ordering him back to his corner. There was nothing for him to see, and she wouldn't have him meddle. The boy, one of those afflicted ones in whom cunning supplies the place of strength, submitted quietly for the moment, but took an opportunity later of slipping out of the room, and creeping up the staircase. His peculiar taste, poor fellow, might have been considered heroic in the Middle Ages; for there was nothing absorbed him so much as a quarrel, especially if it led to a fight. So well was this known among the rough denizens of the neighbourhood, that they would always make room for him, "to see the fun," as they called it; and sometimes got up a scuffle for the amusement of watching his delight.

He had come too late this time, he found; only one man was there, and he was lying on his bed; there were signs enough of a quarrel, in the state of the room, at all of which the idiot boy looked curiously, and then took a long look at the man. Perhaps he was only resting, and would begin again when the other came back, so it would be worth while to wait. And he did wait patiently enough: but, nothing happening, he gave it up for that evening, promising himself to return on the first intimation of anything amusing—a promise he kept several times, though without any immediate result. His mother, only too glad when he was quiet, let him go his own way, without further hindrance.

"He is as like poor Zack as two peas," she said, "and I've a notion he will be quite as clever."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

HOW MARTIN KEPT HIS WORD.

A LONG dreary night of unconsciousness; a still more dreary awakening to thirst, weakness, and oppression, with no help or relief at hand, and no power to seek them, was followed, as a natural result, by a semi-delirium, in which the disordered brain aggravated the misery of

the body. Through every fever dream of those woeful hours there ran a terrible current of reality, drawn from memory's darkest source, bringing back old scenes of cruelty and fraud, but always in the reversed position—himself being now the victim and the sufferer. Now left to perish of thirst on the bare, waterless plain—now hurried by jeering comrades, while sinking under a heavy load, which they would lay on his chest, so that he could hardly breathe—now made to light the fire for the others, though they knew the smoke half maddened his lungs; he seemed to live through months of slavery, with the conviction always present that if he could only make one effort he should be free—and the effort was impossible.

And then came a respite, and Darch knew where he was, and that he was hurt, and ill, and helpless, and no one would come near him, and he might die there like a dog, as miserably as in the Australian desert; and he was gathering all his strength to make some appeal which might reach the ears of his fellow-lodgers below—when a fresh horror revealed itself, before which the rest grew pale.

It was a face close to his own, with large light eyes staring at him through a tangled heap of long hair, and a smile on the parted lips, unlike any he had ever seen, except on those of the dead. Strangely like, and yet unlike the image too well stamped on his guilty soul, it had an awful mystery about it that appalled the stricken wretch as nothing had ever done yet.

In the flesh, or in the spirit, no spectacle could be to him now so fearful as the face of that poor dead boy.

"Zack," he gasped out at last, in desperation, "is it you, lad?"

There was no answer; his strange visitant only nodded towards the door, and then perched himself at the foot of the bed, as if quite prepared to wait. The sufferer made another effort, his agony overcoming his fear.

"Drink, lad—a drop of drink—water, tea—whatever you can get. I'll pay you for it in gold, I will. You brute, don't you see I'm dying of thirst?" And he hurled a volley of abuse at the impassive listener, such as had often rung effectively in the ears of the living Zack, but were utterly powerless towards this inheritor of his doom. Supplications, curses, threats, all seemed alike unintelligible to him; and rage at his placid indifference, combined with the excitement of speaking, soon brought back the delirious raving; and a period ensued of such agony as no pen can describe.

What was this? Where was he now? Camping by a bubbling spring, a breeze getting up after the hot sun, the fire crackling merrily, and the pannikins of tea going round. Yes, and a cool draught at his lips at last. And once more the veil was lifted up between his soul and the world, and his eyes opened on another well-remembered face bending over him—the face of Martin, the Ironhand.

At any other time this would have been an alarming surprise, but now it seemed natural enough; the hunter had found him, and

brought him into the camp, and by all the laws of bush hospitality he would take care of him while he was there. And the relief of his presence was so great that when the cup was again put to his lips he could not help murmuring, "Seems to me, mate, you've saved my life."

Martin made no answer, but continued the services he had rendered already, renewing the wet cloths on the burning temples, and arranging the bed with careful attention to the sufferer's comfort. The latter, refreshed by what he had taken, and by the cool applications to his head, dozed for a short time, more quietly; but awoke with a start, and, looking across the room, broke into a fierce yell at that cur Zack, crouching in the corner to spring upon him when he was asleep—if they were men they would seize him up, and flog him while they could stand over him sooner than let him touch their mate when he was down! And his language became so fearful that it was a relief to the listener when it was checked by the cough, even though the exertion seemed almost to shake him to pieces.

The idiot boy, whose entrance had no doubt brought on the paroxysm of rage, watched Erasmus curiously, expecting the battle to begin, and grudging every moment that it was delayed. A still stronger curiosity had, however, brought his mother to the door, in time to hear something of what had passed, and she came in not a little agitated.

"What makes him call upon Zack like that, sir, do you know? One of the girls heard him before, and I wouldn't believe it. I had a poor afflicted boy before this one, and he went by that name, even when he was in service. You'll have heard of the Craggs Court affair, sir, no doubt, and poor old Mr. Oram, that was robbed, and his house burnt, and my poor Zack in it? The papers was all full of it, sir, and a heavy day it was for us, and so much was felt about the poor innocent lad that died for his master, that they set me up with a mangle afterwards—yes, they did; and very kind I took it, to be sure, though it's a chancy way of making a living. But Tommy here don't take after Zack no ways, though he's very like him, and has tricks of his own, surprising. I shouldn't have dreamed of coming up here if he hadn't made me understand that there had been fighting going on, and the man wouldn't get up—that was just before you come, sir. What does it all mean, do you think?"

"A great deal more than I can tell you now, mistress. But I have heard it said that there is a heavy reckoning to pay for every ill-turn done to one of these."

"'Deed, sir, and that's true, and I've known a rough, surly fellow, as never had a civil word for me or any woman, cuff one of the street lads as was teasing my poor Tommy. The worst among them, and some are bad enough, will let him go in and out when they are most savage with each other, and never lay a hand to hurt a hair of his head. He is frightened by nothing, and there is something in that seems to frighten *them*."

"I wish poor Zack had known his secret. Stop, don't ask me a word more now, but take your boy down stairs this minute. Go—I will see you again."

And he hurried them out of the room, and was just in time to seize the sick man in a frenzied attempt to spring out of bed. Struggling feebly against his superior strength, and shrieking renewed execrations, now upon Zack, now upon the captain, he gradually exhausted himself into quietness, and lay in a partial stupor, scarcely conscious of Martin's presence, even while receiving his attentions.

Some hours had passed, and after several intervals of dozing he had regained sufficient reason to be aware of his situation, and to wonder why he was thus watched and waited upon. A dim suspicion of treachery passed through his mind, and when Martin approached to give him drink, he checked his hand with the hoarse whisper, "Who told you where to find me?"

"I've been on your trail before, Wily."

"And I've been on yours—but not to be your nurse. What are you here for at all?"

"To do you a good turn. Come, Wily Wilkins, you can't kick me down stairs, so you had better keep still. If I had meant mischief, I had only to leave you alone. You are better already, and may get well if you keep quiet."

"Why should you care whether I do or not?"

"Well, perhaps I don't care much either way; but I promised to give you a chance, if I could, and you've got it now."

"Don't see it. Help me up, will you?"

He was still in the dress in which he had been struck down, and when propped by Martin's arm, sat up, looking wildly round him, trying to collect his senses, and to recall what had happened.

"A chance, you say—what is it?"

"The chance of pulling up in time, before you break your neck. It's no good your going on like this, and we won't push you hard. What will you take to go back to the diggings?"

The man shuddered from head to foot. "I wouldn't go for a million of money! I should see that wretched idiot hunting for his treasure at every turn—he was here just now—I saw him as plainly as I see you. There, there! he is coming in at the door—and who is that behind him? You smooth-tongued son of a convict, you have sold me after all!"

He wrenched himself from Martin's hold, and staggered to his feet, as the idiot came creeping in, followed by three men, in one of whom, wrapped in a large cloak, Erasmus recognised Sir Jesse Strahan. The faces of Tommy's mother and sisters, with several others whom curiosity had drawn to the spot, filled up the background, of which, however, Darch Williams saw but little. In the effort to find a weapon, such as he usually carried about his person, giddiness and faintness overpowered him, and he sank back in the hunter's arms.

Martin laid him on the bed, and rose respectfully as Sir Jesse advanced.

"He is only fit for hospital nursing just now," he said, seeing the visit was evidently of a hostile nature.

"Is this your doing, Ironhand?" asked Sir Jesse.

"No, sir—I found him this morning, half dead. He is better than he was, but wants care."

"He shall have it, and we are indebted to you for helping his recovery—supposing your story to be correct."

"I am not used to hear my word doubted, sir."

"Really? You surprise me. I am afraid you will have to accustom yourself to it—unless, indeed, you can bring yourself to make a full confession."

"Confession of what?" Martin stood erect, looking at them all three, with an expression boding little good to any one who might begin an attack.

"Come, come, my friend, you do not require prompting from me. Considering that we find you on intimate terms with Darch Williams, you know pretty well what *that* implies. However, you have every right to be prudent, as what you say will be used against you."

Without replying to the knight, Martin turned to examine the other two. They were not in the police uniform, and his experience was at fault as to their exact position.

"I do not know much about English ways in these things," he said, "but I was in the constabulary in Australia, and I know it was the rule there to meddle with nobody without warrant, and to let every man know of what he was accused."

"Our warrant will be shown you in due time, my man. At present you are required to go with these officers, for the purpose of answering some questions; and if you have been in the service yourself, which I may be allowed to doubt, you will understand that it is best to obey the law quietly."

The hunter's dark eye glowed dangerously, but he maintained his self-control; the rather that it struck him, by so doing, he should be inflicting a disappointment on his enemies. His keenness detected a hidden intention of irritating him into open resistance; and though all his senses were on the alert to seize any opportunity that might occur of obtaining help, he resolved to give them no handle against him by violence. His tranquillity did not, however, quite satisfy his captors, one of whom, though preserving a safe distance, kept his eye on him unceasingly, while his colleague, under Sir Jesse's direction, was engaged in searching the room.

It was some time before this search produced anything that could be called satisfactory; Darch's tools and materials were seized, and his forge carefully examined, but no proof, such as had been expected, was found, until Sir Jesse, whose energy outran that of his adherent, detected a part of the grimy wainscot that seemed to be

looser than the rest, and on its being removed, a package, sewn up in coarse sacking, was brought to light. Sir Jesse's eyes glittered with exultation, and he darted a triumphant glance at Erasmus, who was watching the whole transaction with an interest equal to his own.

"This will do, Burns, this will do," he said; "send for a cab and a couple of men to remove that fellow in his blankets, and I'll take charge of this myself. Slade will remain while you are gone. Clear the passage and staircase on your way, if you can."

"And bring a doctor with you," added Martin, coolly, "unless you wish for an inquest."

A consultation took place in hurried whispers, and it ended in Sir Jesse changing his plan. Desiring Slade to wait there for further orders, he concealed his prize under his cloak, and requested Martin to follow him down stairs, Burns bringing up the rear. The hunter complied, but not before he had bent over Darch, and satisfied himself that he was reviving. He was about to moisten the parched mouth again, but Slade stopped his hand, with a surly hint to mind his own business—there was to be no hocussing of witnesses.

"You'll have a witness that will be hard to deal with, if you don't look well after a fellow in his state," said Martin.

"He will be cared for—you need not be uneasy, my friend," said Sir Jesse, looking back. "You shall have the full benefit of all his testimony can do for you; but I must trouble you now to come with us."

They made their way, with some little difficulty, through the rapidly-increasing crowd; and a plain brougham drawing up at Sir Jesse's signal, he signed to Martin to enter, following him immediately himself, while Mr. Burns took his seat by the driver. The equipage so very much resembled that of a medical practitioner, that many of the spectators took Sir Jesse for the doctor, and his mysterious burden for his case of instruments—a grim whisper to which effect circulating among the younger bystanders, brought one face, full of eager curiosity, to stare into the vehicle. Martin caught his eye, and made a quick sign—so quick that it escaped the notice of his companion, engaged at the moment in securing his prize beneath the seat. It was evidently understood and acted upon; for as the brougham rolled away through the streets, Bill Close followed it, and, in spite of all difficulties, kept it in sight till it stopped at a handsome house, surrounded by walls, and entered through massive iron gates. The gates opened to admit the carriage, and the pursuer was left outside; a circumstance which did not long embarrass him. He took a long look at all the points around, so as to be quite sure of the locality, and then started on a return journey as fast as his legs would carry him.

If Sir Jesse had expected, by an appearance of security, to tempt his prisoner into an effort to escape, he found himself quite mistaken

in his character. It would have been quite contrary to Martin's notions of fair play had he availed himself of what looked like courtesy on the part of an elder man, and used his own superior strength, as he might easily have done, to overpower him in the carriage. His perfect ease of demeanour caused another change in his opponent's tactics. As, by his orders, they alighted at the back entrance of the house, Sir Jesse ordered refreshments to be served in one of his private rooms, and himself conducted Martin and Burns thither, treating the former with civility, and omitting all the insulting remarks with which he had tried his temper before.

"I shall not detain you longer than I can help," he said, as he was leaving the room; "the servants have orders to make you comfortable, and I feel confident that Mr. Martin will do nothing to damage his own cause, but persevere in the sensible behaviour he has so far maintained."

Martin bowed slightly, and as the great man left the room, turned to his satellite with an ironical smile. "You take sensible behaviour for granted here in an uncommonly easy way. I wonder how long it would take me to throw you out of window?"

"Not so long, sir, I dare say, as it would take you to pick me up again—a job that you would find come expensive."

"Do you mean to tell me that I have not a perfect right to walk out of this house if I please—or that, if I chose to do it, you could stop me?"

"I don't mean to say anything, one way or another, sir—no more than this. It seems an easy thing to do, the doors not being locked, and you being the stronger man; but I never yet saw a game won by playing into the enemy's hands, and so I doubt a smart young gentleman like you falling into such a mistake."

"What makes you call me a young gentleman?"

"It is a way I have when I speak to one. Perhaps I could tell you more about yourself than you know. Do you remember, some fourteen years ago, frying steaks and making bread for some hungry, frightened men, who had been hunted by bushrangers, and whom you and your father fed, and dried, and clothed, and housed, at the risk of being murdered for your pains? Ah, I see you remember it, though you have forgotten me; you are grown into a man yourself, but I knew your face directly I saw you—and I've been following you about for some days."

"I cannot say I know yours," said Martin, speaking with some difficulty, for his features were strangely agitated, "but the whole affair is as clear to me as if it had been yesterday. If you remember *him*, do you remember what he said when it proved a false alarm?"

"Aye, sir, I do—he said thieves didn't rob each other, or something of that kind—I know I thought he was mistaken at the time, for they *do* every day."

"Do you believe he was one of them?"

"I, sir? Not a bit of it. He was a gentleman, every inch of him, though every stick of furniture in the hut was his own making. No one could sit up talking, as we did, and not see that, and a monstrous clever head he had, too—there was no putting him out, talk of what you would. If I hadn't come to grief out there, and lost all I had in speculations, I fully meant to have found him out, and showed him I was grateful. As it turned out, I was ruined, and came home to get a living as I could, and when you come to that, you can't be a chooser. I have been in this man's pay now some time, and so has Plummer, and we are both in the same mind—that we should not object to a better service."

"Do you mean that you would serve *me* if you could?"

"No if in the case—I mean that we can, and we will. Now, sir, keep your own counsel, for here comes John with the tray, and a pair of eyes and ears ready to fly out of his head with curiosity."

The door opened as he spoke, and the materials for a substantial meal were quickly set before the two, the young footman being evidently flurried, and consequently making wonderful haste. The side-glances he stole at Martin fully confirmed Burns's description, and the hunter could not refrain from a smile, though little inclined for merriment. On the departure of this attendant, Burns pressed Erasmus to sit down and join him in doing justice to the viands, reminding him that he might want all the strength he had, if not more; but Martin shook his head. He could fast, if need were, as he had often done; but he was not going to eat the bread of a man who had chosen to treat him in such a manner. So Burns, who had no such scruples, was fain to fall to alone, and did his best to lay in a stock of strength for both.

"I suppose I may be allowed to use pen and paper?" observed Martin, as he took out his large pocket-book, whence he produced his travelling writing materials. Burns nodded, with his mouth full.

"Write what you please, but I won't be answerable for what will become of your handiwork. Any letter you want to send must be posted either by you or me, and they're too fond of us just now to give us the chance."

Martin made no reply, but sat down to write; and the occupation being one to which he was little accustomed, proved sufficiently absorbing to prevent the time hanging on his hands. It was only when the daylight failed, that he began to wonder how much longer he should be detained. Burns, who was heartily tired of waiting, beguiled the interval with Australian reminiscences; in the midst of which Sir Jesse entered, followed by Mr. Plummer and a rather stiff-looking functionary, whom he addressed as Mr. Superintendent. The gas was lighted, and Martin perceived that Slade and another man were standing in the doorway. He himself had risen on their entrance, and now stood with his hand resting on his chair, waiting to see in what all this was to end.

"I am sorry to have kept you waiting so long," said Sir Jesse, as he gave a seat to the superintendent, and took another himself, "but the state of the other witness made it difficult to take down his deposition. It will be read to you, after you have made your own, that you may correct it if necessary. Mr. Superintendent has a question or two to ask, which, no doubt, can be satisfactorily answered."

Erasmus bowed, and turned to that official, eyeing him from head to foot with very little reverence.

"I may have a question or two to put to him in return, so the sooner he begins the better. What does he want to know?"

The authority, thus set at defiance, looked more disturbed than might have been expected, but covered annoyance with an official frown.

"Take my advice, and wait till you are spoken to, young man. You will find quite enough to do, I fancy, in answering what I have to ask: and take care you answer truly. Now, then, what do you call yourself?"

"Erasmus Martin."

"Are you known by any other name?"

"They sometimes call me the Ironhand."

"You did something to earn such an epithet, I suppose?"

"Something."

"Your hand has not lost its power—you exercise it now and then, I dare say?"

"Not so often as I am tempted to do."

"You found rather a strong temptation lately, didn't you?"

"Look here; I have never been half as much tempted as I am this minute, so we'll drop that, if you've no objection."

The official looked at Sir Jesse; and, after a moment's hesitation, turned the interrogatory into a different channel.

"What is your profession, or employment?"

"I am a gentleman's servant."

"Is your master in town?"

"No, he is gone down into Devonshire."

"How is it you are left behind?"

"Well, really, I don't see what affair that can be of yours. Mr. Bruce is satisfied, so that may satisfy the police."

"I beg your pardon; a great many things seem to satisfy Mr. Bruce, on which the police hold a different opinion. What duties do you perform in your quality as a servant?"

"I watch over my master."

"A very praiseworthy employment. It would seem, from the evidence before me, that your master has been singularly unfortunate in meeting with adventures, since he returned to England—is that so?"

"He has been followed by some villains, for their own ends, or the ends of other people, and they nearly succeeded once or twice."

"You know the parties, of course?"

"I know one of them—Wily Wilkins, as he was called at the diggings."

"Do you know him by the name of Darch Williams?"

"I have lately discovered that to be his real one."

"He is an old acquaintance of yours?"

"One of whom I am not at all proud."

"You were doing your best to-day to get rid of him?"

"I would have helped him out of the country if he would have listened to reason, and given up his tricks."

"Exactly; you had punished him rather severely, hadn't you, considering that you meant to act so kindly?"

"I don't know what you call punishing—I found him neglected and ill, and I did what I could; he had had a knock from somebody, and was raving with thirst."

"Are you aware that he has deposed to the fact that the blow in question was given by you?"

"He has said that? Well, I ought not to be surprised; but, either he is light-headed again, or he thinks he shall get something by lying."

"He was quite himself—his words were taken down, and read to him afterwards."

"I should say he was quite himself, then, for it is like him, though I was willing to give him a chance. What else does he say of me, may I ask?"

"You shall hear, Mr. Erasmus Martin. And when you have heard, it will be for you to consider whether the style you are pleased to adopt is the wisest. It matters little here, where the enquiry is private; but before a magistrate it would harm your cause more than you can imagine. I think, Mr. Plummer, I am giving good advice?"

"I am sure Mr. Plummer will say you are right," said Sir Jesse, looking full at that gentleman's downcast face, "if he has listened to what has passed with as much regret as I have."

Mr. Plummer raised his head and looked, not at Sir Jesse, but at Martin. "If the young gentleman wishes for my advice, I shall offer it—not otherwise."

"I suppose I had better have it," said Martin, "for I am all in a fog about your ways and laws here, and I don't want to run my head against a wall. What does all this mean? Tell me honestly."

"It means," said the lawyer, quietly changing his place, so as to be by the side of the hunter, instead of at the opposite corner, "that a heavy charge is being brought against you, and that if you will accept my services, I will undertake your defence."

(To be concluded.)

KING SOLOMON'S OPAL.

AS I was sitting in my library a week or two ago, my daughter Brita—we of the old Swedish blood still cling to the dear old Swedish names—came dancing like a sunbeam into the room. "Is it not glorious!" exclaimed she, giving into my hand a new opal ring which she had been buying with the accumulated savings of the past year.

"It is a fire opal, papa," she continued. "See how the flames flash and quiver in its depths. Oh, it is too beautiful! Do you think, papa, that the old fable is true, and that opals really are unlucky?"

I too am a dear lover of opals. In fact, it is about the only stone that I care much for. And as I held up the gem so that the light might shine upon it, and saw red and crimson waves flow through its pearly depths, I experienced anew that singular fascination which this mysterious stone has always exerted over me.

"Yes, it is gloriously beautiful, my daughter. It is the type of the highest order of womanhood—of women serene and calm on the surface, but with the warm and crimson waves of love and devotion flowing beneath, and rendering them capable of any sacrifice for their husbands, their families, or their God."

"And they surely are too beautiful to be stones of ill-omen, papa?" reiterated Brita. For I am afraid she is, like most of us, a little superstitious.

"I knew one curious case, my daughter, in which the opal figured. And, there it seemed to be an omen of good, a perfect amulet and talisman. But the story is a long one, and I have not time to tell it now. Perhaps some day I will write it out for you."

"Some day is no day, papa. Will you write it for my next birthday?"

"Why, your next birthday is not two weeks off!"

Brita laughed, and then put her arms around my neck and kissed me. "I should value it so much as a birthday present, papa, and I am very impatient to hear the story. Did they get married happily at the end? I should like to know that *now*."

"You little witch! I will not tell you. Besides, I have not said there was any lady in the case. It was a very serious matter, I assure you. But you may look for the story on your birthday."

And, dear reader, here it is—for Brita and for you.

It was a fine morning in the month of September, and about twenty years ago, when I found myself on horseback, and approaching the little town of M——, in the south-eastern part of Kentucky.

Some ten miles back I had made the acquaintance of a fellow-traveller, and we had journeyed on together. He was, like myself, a young man—and, unlike me, was full of vehemence and ardour. We had not travelled five miles together before he told me his name, his birthplace, his business; and also mentioned the name of the gentleman he was going to visit—one Colonel Morgan, who lived two miles beyond M——.

He had a handsome, good face, with the blue eyes of some Northern and the dark hair and skin of some Southern ancestor. As I looked at him I said to myself—another fine specimen of the American Norman. For the same mixture of Celtic with Saxon or Danish blood, which made the Norman race of old, and gave it a superior force and refinement to either of the parent stocks, is creating in this New World the finest and handsomest race of the earth.

Louis Atherton—as I will call him for the occasion—was no big, bulky knight, such as sat with King Arthur at his Round Table. He was below the middle height, for that matter—but he was quick and strong and supple. He was as the blade of Saladin, rather than the great two-handed sword of King Richard. But, as men look at men, he would, if aroused, be an antagonist by no means to be despised.

Talking cheerfully upon commonplace matters, we trotted slowly up to a common country tavern, which stood on the outskirts or M——, and, as the day had been quite warm, and the road dusty, stopped to water our horses and stretch our limbs a little. Quite a crowd of men of the rougher class had gathered in front of the tavern, and a loud and somewhat angry discussion seemed to be going on. Dismounting and walking up to the outer circle of the crowd, we saw in the centre an old man, with a small pack in his hands, who was evidently a Jewish pedlar, but an uncommonly fine and intelligent looking specimen of his class. He was speaking as we came up—addressing the crowd generally, and a huge, stalwart, coarse-looking person, who seemed half-blackguard and half-gentleman, particularly.

"You asked me whether I was the wandering Jew," said the pedlar, in excited tones. "I answer you that I am both a wanderer and a Jew."

"Yes," interrupted his antagonist, "a low, mean, treacherous Jew! who crucified—you know Whom you Jews crucified. For which act all decent men are bound to hate them and their very name!"

"And so you, even you, reverence His name?"

"Of course we do, hang your impudence," replied the ruffianly-looking giant. "Do you suppose we are all heathens like yourself? We are Christians."

"You are Christians, are you—followers of Him? Well, who was He?"

The giant, whose name was Galbraith, and who had evidently been

drinking freely, abused the Jew in answer, with a great deal of bad, free language, which was most offensive to right-minded ears, taken in connection with the sacred topic. The venerable old man resumed calmly,

"I asked you who He was. As you do not seem to know, I will tell you. Jesus of Nazareth was himself a Jew—one of my own race."

The words, truthful though they were, and inoffensively spoken, did not please Mr. James Galbraith. He extended his massive arms, and deliberately felled the old man to the earth. Then, kneeling down, he battered his face with his ponderous fist.

Atherton could not stand that. Springing forward, he seized the unsteady giant, and flung him away from his victim.

"Are you men and Kentuckians," exclaimed he, contemptuously, to the bystanders, "to see an old man abused like that?"

"He insulted us," replied one of them in a surly tone, while Galbraith rose to his feet, and drew a pistol from his pocket. The Jew also rose, and commenced wiping the blood from his white hair and bruised face.

The affair began now to take a dangerous aspect, for others of the crowd also drew their pistols, while Atherton and I, revolvers in hand, stood close together by the side of the Jew. Probably a few moments would have ended the whole difficulty, and the three of us been riddled by bullets, had not a party of gentlemen ridden up. Perceiving the disturbance, they reined-in.

"Why, Atherton, is that you?" called out a handsome man, who was foremost in the party of new-comers. "What is the matter?"

"Oh, not much," was the young man's reply. "Only I don't like your Kentucky way of treating old men, Colonel."

"It is a dog of a Jew, Colonel Morgan," said one of the crowd, "and he insulted us Christians."

This, of course, was not true: the insults had come from the other side. The poor, peaceable old man would not have meddled with them had they let him alone. Colonel Morgan had no difficulty in divining this.

"If you went to church oftener, and to the tavern less, Thompson," said he in a light tone to the man who had last spoken, "it might be, better for some of you. "Come, Louis, mount; you and your friend," he added to us. "I am bound homewards. They will all be glad to see you; and the more so that we did not expect you until to-morrow."

"Colonel Morgan," said Galbraith, steadying himself, and scowling beneath his heavy brows, "I knocked the Jew down because he was insolent, as I would knock down any other man, Christian or Jew, who did not keep a civil tongue in his head."

The Colonel bowed in silence. Then, turning to Atherton, myself, and the others who had been with him, spoke: "Let us ride on, gentlemen."

"Colonel Morgan," again broke out the giant, "I have a word to say to that young friend of yours before you go. That young gentleman took the liberty of interfering between me and that miserable scoundrel of a Jew. He laid violent hands upon me, and pushed me over on my back in the dirt. Now he looks like a Northerner, and probably does not know yet what we think of such liberties in Kentucky. May I ask you to inform him, that no man can insult a Kentucky man with impunity; least of all, a gentleman and a Galbraith? I shall expect him to give me satisfaction."

"Oh, nonsense, Galbraith, we must not expect as much of a Northerner as a Kentuckian," returned the Colonel, lightly, trying to mollify the giant; but I fancied he did not feel as easy as he spoke. "He is a young man, you see; and young men often act overhastily."

"Colonel Morgan," broke in Atherton, hotly, evidently not liking these excuses, "I will thank you to allow me to be the guardian of my own honour. I did interfere with that individual's brutality towards an old and defenceless man; and I should do precisely the same thing again if I saw cause."

Galbraith smiled grimly. "You won't talk quite so loudly tomorrow, my young Northerner."

Atherton curled his lip. "My father was a Southerner, though he did live in the North. And he taught me that it was better to die, when I could no longer live with honour."

"Mr. Atherton is going home with me, and can be found at my house at any time," interrupted Colonel Morgan, anxiously putting an end to the scene.

We rode on. After a few awkward moments of silence, Atherton regained his equanimity, and introduced me to Colonel Morgan as his fellow traveller of a few miles back, while he also took occasion to thank me for standing by him in what might have been a disagreeable fray. The Colonel, with the usual generous Western hospitality, repeated his invitation to me, and said I must stay a day or two with his family.

The conversation turned upon what had occurred. Colonel Morgan did not hesitate to express his uneasiness. If Atherton would have been willing to avoid further danger by an ignominious flight, I believe the Colonel, Southerner as he was, would almost have rejoiced at it. For he saw no issue out of the affair, but death for his friend; and how near Atherton was to him, was soon to become apparent to me.

Galbraith, he said, was one of six brothers, all of the same giant mould. They were of good family, but given to low company, to gambling, and intemperance, and all were famous for their duelling propensities. In fact, they were a terror to the neighbourhood on this account, and several of the finest young men of M——, who had been forced to fight through insults, had already fallen beneath

their fatal aim. If it were not for their intemperate habits, to meet them in the field were almost certain death. But their hands were growing less steady than formerly, and this gave their opponents a better chance, while it made them somewhat less impudent and reckless; not much so.

At the Colonel's gate we parted company; he, I, and Atherton turning to his mansion, the rest continuing their way. Each gentleman, before riding on, expressed his sympathy, and his desire to afford any aid that he could. If a duel took place, they all promised to be on the ground and see fair play. It seemed that duels were made great occasions of in M——, and the public were not only at liberty to attend, but were expected to be present.

As we rode up the avenue, the Colonel questioned Atherton as to his shooting abilities. The latter replied that he was near-sighted, and of course could not shoot at long distances—but at fifteen or twenty feet, he could often hit a button. The Colonel groaned. "Galbraith," said he, "can always kill at twenty paces."

When we entered the mansion, and were introduced to the Colonel's wife and only daughter, I soon saw, by unmistakable signs, tha tthe acquaintance with Atherton was of long standing. The soft tone in which "Mr. Atherton" was spoken by the young lady, and the frequent mistake of using "Louis" instead, together with the kind, motherly manner of Mrs. Morgan, soon proved to me that Miss Rose Morgan was the secret attraction that had drawn my new acquaintance to Kentucky.

After dinner, as we still sat chatting in the dining-room, the Colonel related to his wife and daughter what had occurred. It was a blow to them both. Both knew the customs prevailing in the State—that a challenge *could not* be refused or avoided—but neither let fall a word to show she thought that any other course but one was possible. But I noticed that, after this, Rose manifested less timidity and reserve, and behaved toward Atherton as if every one knew, or might know, that she was his betrothed. A duel with one of the dreadful giant Galbraiths meant almost certain death.

Atherton fully realised the danger of his situation. In fact, he evidently admitted to himself that there was no reasonable chance of escape. Galbraith was a practised duellist, and a sure shot. He himself was neither. Besides, as the Colonel had rather incautiously let out, even the death of Jim Galbraith might not release him from peril. One of the brothers, in such a case, probably would renew the challenge. It was their custom. There was no telling what such a pestiferous, daring, and reckless brood would do. Other men who slept on their wrath might find it soften by morning. With the Galbraiths, time only seemed to intensify their hate. They chewed the bitter cud of what they deemed an insult until it seemed tenfold more bitter than at first; and an insult to one became magnified into an insult to all. In short, they appeared to live to insult people,

that they might challenge and kill them, and to find their best enjoyment in it.

As the thought of all this bore down heavily upon Atherton's heart—and he turned from it to the beautiful face of the young girl by his side—it doubtless seemed to him that life was never so sweet as in this moment, when he might be standing on the very brink of the grave.

As we sat thus quietly in the parlour, a servant ushered in an old man, in whom we recognised at once the Jew. In spite of the bruises of his face, and the meanness of his attire, there was something very noble in the appearance of the traveller, as with modest, but erect bearing he entered the room, and, with a low and sweeping obeisance to all, walked up to Atherton.

"I come," said he—as Atherton, gentleman as he was in every fibre, rose and held out his hand, which the Jew lightly pressed for a moment, "to thank you, my young preserver and deliverer, for your generous deed. But far rather would I be lying dead at the door of that tavern, crushed into the clay by the scoffer's heel than that you should come to harm because you have been kind to me, a stranger. They say in the town that that man means to kill you to-morrow, that there is no escape for you. Have you heard from him?"

"I have not," replied Atherton, haughtily, while his pale cheek flushed. "But it may not be so easy to kill me as he thinks. Two can play at that game."

"So spake David," said the Jew approvingly, "when he went out to fight with Goliah. Be not dismayed, my son, at his size, or the fierceness of his countenance. He shall not prevail against thee! I, Solomon the Jew—I, in whose veins flows the blood of Solomon the king—I say that he shall not prevail against thee! Thou shalt smite him as David smote Goliah!"

It was impossible to avoid being impressed by the Jew's earnestness. He seemed no longer a mere man—he looked and talked like a prince of the House of David.

Mrs. Morgan, especially, was greatly impressed. "And are you of the lineage of Solomon?" she excitedly asked.

"I am!" replied the Jew loftily. "I am Solomon Ben Judah, of the House of David. Look at this—for the hand of Solomon the Great has held it—and his kingly breast has felt its mystic touch."

The Jew, as he spoke, drew, from some secret pocket, a gem of considerable value—it was a large fire opal, set in some curious filigree work of gold. Attached to it was a purple ribbon.

"This gem," he continued, in the same impressive manner that seemed so full of awe, "belongs to the head of our house. I am that head. But I am the last of our great line. Whoever wears this gem upon his bosom, shall never come to a violent death—neither at the hand of man, neither at the hand of God! No, for it was bestowed by God. I am the last of my line—take it, my friend,

my champion; and the bullet of thy enemy shall never take thy life."

Atherton took the gem in his hand. We crowded around to examine it.

"Look at it closely, all of you," continued the Jew. "There is something to be seen within its depths, and blessed is he who can see it."

Atherton passed it around to each of us, and we peered intently into the mysterious stone; but while we all acknowledged it to be a splendid gem of its kind, we could see nothing peculiar in its crimson depths.

At last the opal came back to Atherton. "Let me look," said he, playfully; and as he took the gem into his hand, I noticed that the eyes of the Jew watched him with a close and anxious eagerness. Suddenly Atherton's face grew serious. "I think I see it," said he, slowly—"I am certain I see it. It is very curious though. It looks like a man's hand—perhaps an angel's hand, grasping and waving a flaming sword."

"Now, glory be to the God of my fathers!" cried the Jew, and he flung up his hands in reverent thankfulness. "He has heard the cry of the despairing, and stretched forth the might of Gabriel's arm to shield and save! Young man, in that sign thou shalt surely conquer! To few possessors of that stone is it given to see what thou hast seen. I never saw it. But whoso seeth it, he shall not only hold his life in safety, but no one shall be able to prevail in any degree against him. Honours and riches and length of days shall be his, and all men shall call him blessed! Dismiss then all fear of thy adversaries—not one shall prevail against thee. But thou shalt bow their faces in the dust—thou shalt conquer and triumph like David and like Solomon."

"But it would not be right for me to keep so valuable a gem, my venerable friend," said Atherton, when he had recovered his surprise, holding out the opal towards the Jew.

"I should not *dare* to take it back now, even if I wished to," replied the Jew. "Heaven has spoken in showing thee the sign. Rejoice in thy good fortune—and never forget the poor and the oppressed: succour and stand up for them as you stood up for me. I depart now in peace. For I know thou art safe behind the outstretched sword of Gabriel!" And making again his low and sweeping obeisance, Solomon Ben Judah left the room.

"Well," said the Colonel, "of all extraordinary things, this beats them. I confess I am impressed. It almost seems to me as if matters would go right now; that the difficulty was settled, the danger lessened or removed."

"I think so," added Mrs. Morgan, with fervour.

"I am sure so," said Rose, in her hopefulness. "Louis will, in some way, go through the ordeal unscathed."

The Colonel looked amused, and as if it were at the end of his tongue to say, "just like a woman;" but for self-evident reasons, he held his peace. Anything was to be welcomed that would comfort and support the female portion of his family in this trying hour.

"Let me try again if I can see anything in that opal," said Mrs. Morgan. And Mr. Atherton handed it to her. She gazed intently; but owned, with a sigh, she could not see the mystic sign. And then the stone was passed around among us. But look as we would, not one could see it.

"Pshaw, I guess it was all your imagination, Louis," exclaimed the Colonel, after a long gaze, and shifting the opal so that the light fell upon it from all possible angles. "It is full of magnificent lustres—but all is wavy, nothing is distinct."

"You will please remember, Colonel, that the Jew had not dropped a word as to what he wished me to see until I described it," rejoined Atherton. "I did see it. I see it now in my mind clearly—a milk-white hand, grasping the hilt of a crimson sword—or rather a scimitar, for it was curved in the Asiatic fashion, like the famous blades of Damascus. But it is curious that I cannot discern anything now," he added, rather abashed.

"Perhaps it is not meant that you should see it always. It might become too common a thing to you, and lose its mystic power over your spirit," said Mrs. Morgan, with a woman's ready faith.

"It is there; I caught a glance of it just now—I knew my eyes had not deceived me; I saw it as plainly as I see that picture on the wall," cried Atherton, in a glow of enthusiasm. Evidently his faith in the talisman was becoming fixed; almost as strong as that of Rose. The latter gently took up the opal.

"Let me hang it round your neck; do not part with it for a moment," said she: and with trembling hands and blushing face, she did so.

At this moment some visitors were announced. They proved to be a gentleman and lady from a neighbouring estate, friends of the Morgans, and their little girl. The former did not strike me as peculiar in any way, but the little girl was certainly the most angelic little creature I ever saw. Such hair! such large, liquid eyes! so sweet an expression!

After sitting awhile in her mother's lap, the little Cecilia got down and began to stray around the room. At once all arms were extended toward her, and "come to me," "no, come to me," resounded on all sides. The shy little puss smiled, however, and would not reciprocate these advances, until she came opposite to where Atherton was sitting. Then, as he held out his arms like the rest, she softly glided into them, was lifted upon his knee, and laid her little shining head against the opal in his bosom.

"It is always so," said Colonel Morgan, laughing. "Children always prefer the gentlemen. I have noticed it fifty times."

"The reason is very evident," replied Mrs. Taliaferro (they pronounced it Toliver; rather oddly, I thought); "we women are with them always, keep them in order, and become associated in their minds with all sorts of restrictions. The gentlemen come in, take them in their arms, show them their watches, dance them up and down, and play with them. Of course the little ones find them all that is pleasant and agreeable."

"Pretty well argued that," replied the Colonel, with a smile; "and probably it is not very far from the truth—though, of course, Mrs. Taliaferro, you would not expect us to admit it. We could remind you of our superior magnetism."

"Oh, yes," laughed Mrs. Taliaferro, "men are vain enough to believe anything of themselves."

Little Cecilia was now on the floor again, standing before a low table, on which some books were lying. Taking one of them in her waxen arms, she lugged it up to Atherton, and opening it, put her tiny finger on one of the pages.

"'Ead, 'ead," said she to him.

"Oh, Cecy, you must not trouble the gentleman; he has not time to read to you," interposed her mother.

"'Ead! 'ead!" repeated the child in an imperative tone; and Louis, smiling, bent his eyes upon the passage where her fairy finger rested.

"Why, this is a scientific work, my little princess," said he. "You would not care to hear this."

Then a sudden change came over his countenance. I chanced to be looking at him, and saw it. Something in the book had arrested all his faculties, and enchained his utmost attention. He seemed to be devouring every word, his head bent, his face strangely thoughtful. The child, either finding herself neglected, or from mere childish caprice, left his side and went back to her mother; but still Atherton read on.

"You seem to have found something very interesting in that book, Louis," said Miss Morgan, approaching him, who had, like myself, noticed his absorbed interest.

"I have," he replied; but he at once shut the book, and replaced it on the table, while a firm and resolute expression seemed to harden his usually mobile mouth into sculptured marble.

As soon as the visitors had left the house, Atherton asked to see his host's pistols.

The Colonel, with a sigh, produced them. Of course there might be no duel yet; but Colonel Morgan, in his own mind, felt sure of one.

They were two old smooth-bore duelling pistols, handsomely mounted with silver, which had belonged to his father. We left the house, and came near a small rise, or hill, which would catch all wandering balls. Colonel Morgan's favourite servant had been told to follow us, and he now loaded the pistols.

"Colonel, I wish to try an experiment," said Louis. "I wish you to take the other pistol, while our friend here says, 'one, two, three;' at the word 'three' we will both fire at that tree," and he pointed to a maple about twenty feet distant. "Be attentive, please, and fire as quickly as you can; for I wish to see who can shoot first."

"I will be ready at the word—don't doubt that; I am accustomed to this kind of thing," said the Colonel, with the look of one of Bonaparte's old campaigners.

They made ready. I took up my position behind them, for I thought that the safest place. I had heard of balls glancing, and barrels bursting, you know—though I had never seen a duel in my life.

"One, *two*, THREE!" At the word "THREE," came two reports, but one decidedly in advance of the other.

"I told you I should shoot first if you did not take care," said Atherton, with a smile.

The Colonel, who stood six feet high, and was bulky, looked down on him with quite a patronising smile. "You did well, Louis, I grant. In fact I *was* a little slow; but usually I am pretty quick on the trigger."

"I'll bet you a gold dollar, if you like, Colonel, just to make it interesting, and put you on your mettle, that I can shoot first nine times out of ten."

"Done, my boy, and right glad I should be to lose the bet. But, you see, it is simply impossible."

They commenced the trial. To the Colonel's mixed pleasure and mortification—for he was both proud of his young friend and mortified at his own failure—Atherton not only won nine out of the ten, but the whole ten shots. It was evident that he could shoot quicker than the Colonel; he had done so each time.

"Now, Colonel, I think if you will examine that tree, you will find all my shots, as well as all yours, in the very heart of it."

"Oh, of course," replied the Colonel, "a child could not miss at that distance. Yes, here they are, a perfect magazine of bullets."

"Colonel, would it be right in me to kill that Galbraith? Perhaps I shall, if he forces me to meet him."

"Right! Why, what do you mean?"

"Well, I don't like the idea of killing a man, even in a duel. Is Galbraith married? Has he children? Has he any one dependent upon him?"

"Of course it would be right," cried the Colonel, hotly. "If you could kill not only Jim Galbraith, but the whole vile brood of them, you would be doing this district a good and great service. None of them are married: they are a different sort of men: they are too busy with drinking, gambling, and fighting, for matrimonial ties. They live all together, in a most disreputable manner, in the old family mansion. And such orgies as they have there, if report is to be

believed, are a disgrace to any Christian country. The eldest of them, Bob, died a few years ago from the bite of a rattlesnake. Did you ever hear an anecdote about it?"

"No, I never heard of *him*."

"Well, Bob was bitten by a rattlesnake, and in his dying moments, though the brothers were never in the habit of troubling churches or clergymen much, they sent for good old Father Brownlow, the Methodist minister. Father Brownlow came, put Bob through a course of spiritual exercises, pictured very vividly to him what he might expect in the near hereafter, and brought the poor wretch to realise a sense of his condition. Then Bob made a confession of his many sins, professed true repentance, promised that he would be a good man and join the church if he lived—and died."

"Yes. Well?"

"The next day, at the funeral ceremonies, Father Brownlow officiated. And this is said to have been the winding up of his prayer on the occasion. Mind, I do not say it really was so, for I was not present; but those who were there repeated it far and wide.

"'Merciful Heaven, we thank Thee finally for all things—for even in what seems most evil to us, lies often our chiefest good. Thou sent a rattlesnake to bite Bob Galbraith, who was on the broad road to perdition, and he was saved, as we hope, though by a mighty narrow chance, through Thy mercy. And now we pray Thee to send another rattlesnake and let him bite Jim Galbraith—and yet another to bite Bill—and yet another to bite Tom—and yet another to bite Sam—and yet another to bite Ned—and yet another to bite Mose—and let this be a big one if it please Thee, for Mose is the very worst of the whole bad lot—so that they may all repent and be converted, and find favour and compassion at the last with Thee!'"

We could not help smiling, in spite of the serious subject. The Colonel observed that it would serve to show what the Galbraiths were, and what the neighbourhood thought of them.

"I think I read that anecdote when I was a boy, Colonel," said I. "I have no doubt that some humourist in M——, remembering it, and thinking it would exactly suit the case of the Galbraiths, simply attributed the words to Father Brownlow, and set the story going again with a new setting."

"Very likely," rejoined the Colonel. "You know I did not vouch for the authenticity of the anecdote; but, as I said, it shows what all around here think of those dissipated ruffians, the Galbraiths. You do not, you cannot know what a terror they are, and how bad they are; I could not sully my lips by alluding to the sins and crimes they commit, the ruin they inflict; neither can I tell you of half the fine young men of promise they have first of all insulted, then forced to fight, and then killed. Right to kill *them*, Atherton! It would be a good work. We have marvelled that Heaven has let them live so long to be the curse they are."

"I shall shoot him if we fight; I know I shall, as surely as that we are now alive."

"You have faith in yourself," observed the Colonel, anxiously.

The lines of Atherton's face became again as firm and rigid as stone. "I have. I tell you I shall certainly kill him if we fight. You know the power of my talisman—the opal of King Solomon."

Hardly had we returned to the house when one of the ponderous giants arrived—Moses—and was shown into the library. He bore a challenge from his eldest brother. But Mr. Mose intimated—evidently despising a Northerner—that in case Atherton would go down on his knees in the dirt, on the very spot where the offence was given, and humbly beg for pardon, he should be allowed to escape without a meeting. But, to the surprise of Mr. Mose, the challenge was immediately accepted by Atherton, who referred him to Colonel Morgan as his second and friend. As the challenged party, we had the choice of weapons, distance, and such like matters.

"Five paces!" exclaimed Mr. Mose, as his eyes opened at the proposed distance. "The youth seems in a particular hurry to quit the world. I should advise him to say his prayers and make his will, that is all."

The Colonel and he were sitting at one end of the room; Louis and I were at the other, but within hearing.

"Colonel," called out Atherton, "will you be kind enough to send word to Mr. Jim Galbraith that to-morrow he shall surely die, and this part of the country be rid of an atrocious ruffian."

"Does the boy know, Colonel, that that is an insult to me—I, who am here to bear my brother's message?" said Mose, excitedly, growing crimson.

"I know it, and I mean it for the whole of the brothers Galbraith," returned Atherton, his voice stern but low-toned. It was a peculiarity of his. The more excited he became, the lower, clearer, and more distinct became his words. They fell from his lips like so many silver bells.

"And the Galbraiths will answer the insult to-morrow," rejoined Mose, fairly hoarse with passion. "I challenge you in the name of the whole family—one after another. We will kill you, if it takes the whole of us to do it. You——"

"Hold, Mr. Galbraith, there is no necessity for that. You have given your challenge, and it is accepted. To-morrow, at the time and place appointed, we will meet you. Good afternoon, sir."

The giant arose, and, without saying another word, left the room, the Colonel accompanying him to the door in silence. There they nodded coldly to each other, and parted.

"Well, we *are* in for it now, Louis," said the Colonel, in a desponding voice. "What could you mean by so desperate and reckless a piece of folly?"

Atherton smiled. "I do not know, my kind friend; but really I

could not help it. It seemed as if some spirit of avenging wrath took possession of me for the moment, and spoke through my lips. But fear not; am I not protected, as the old Jew said, by the flaming sword of Gabriel? I have no fear. I know I shall triumph. My only doubt is whether I ought to meet them, knowing—at least, believing—that I must be the victor. They think themselves so strong, so sure in their aim—they are such giants in the land—and yet in their very strength lies their weakness. I shall shoot them down, just as if they were unarmed."

"You depend entirely upon the quickness of your fire, then? They are good shots—perhaps they may be quicker than you."

Atherton smiled; it was a grave, peculiar smile. "I believe otherwise," he said. "It has been shown to me otherwise. I will say no more now, my good friend. If I fall, you may conclude I was mistaken. But if I do not fall, when we return from the field I will explain the ground of my confidence."

The next day rose beautifully clear and pleasantly cool. Atherton slept soundly, rose calmly. For myself, I must confess I could not sleep from uneasiness.

Breakfast over, we prepared to leave the house. I expected a scene; but there was none. Atherton said good-bye to Rose apart, and then approached her mother, who kissed and blessed him.

"I know, I feel certain that you will come back to us in safety," she said through her tears. "The God of Israel is also our God, and He will be your sure defence and shield."

Evidently she, if no one else, had sure faith in the Jew's opal talisman.

Half the men of M—— had collected on the ground at the place of meeting. Many of the gentlemen of the neighbourhood came to see fair play, for they had no faith in the honour of the Galbraiths; others from curiosity. The Galbraiths were already there—towering above all others—a veritable race of Anaks. Giants in strength, and giants in wicked deeds.

As Louis Atherton, short and slender as a boy, sprung from his horse, the crowd looked at him in wonder. Was that the stripling who had the temerity to defy the whole giant brood of the Galbraiths? But as their eyes dwelt upon his firm, undaunted, handsome face, and marked his clear, resolute tones, their hearts warmed towards him, even because he was so young, slight, and inoffensive; and he became in a moment, as it were, a universal favourite.

"A plucky little fellow!" said one of the leaders of opinion; and the phrase went around from one to another. It meant a great deal with them.

But when they further heard that the challenged party had insisted upon "five paces," their admiration knew no bounds. "I swar," said one tall man, nearly a match for the giants, "I've a mind to

push that little minnow aside, and take Jim Galbraith in hand myself. I will, if he shoots him."

The Galbraiths knew that they were not popular characters, and clustered in a little, or rather big knot, with a few of their particular associates, scowling at intervals towards Atherton, who was the centre of an admiring throng. "And so you knocked big Jim Galbraith down, did you?" said the tall man who had before spoken, and who, as he had his rifle with him, looked like a hunter from the neighbouring mountain ranges. "Oh, you're a brave little one!"

"Come, gentlemen," cried the Colonel, interposing. "All is ready. Clear the ground."

The throng separated so as to give a range to the balls; and the antagonists were placed in position, with instructions to fire at the word "THREE," but not an instant before.

"I swar, Jim Galbraith," said the hunter, who had made himself an express champion of Atherton, "if you play any of your tricks, and shoot one moment before the word, I'll drop you as you stand."

"Silence!" cried out an authoritative voice. And there ensued a moment's dead, ominous stillness.

"One, *two*, THREE!"

Two pistols sounded, one of them a shade before the other, and Jim Galbraith fell like a log to the ground. They hastened to him and found him—dead. Stone dead—shot through the heart. His ball had just grazed Atherton's shoulder.

The old hunter rushed up to Atherton, and caught him up in his arms like an infant. "Oh, you plucky one!" cried he. "Look at him! he has shot big Jim Galbraith!"

But the Galbraiths and their friends were furious. While some removed the unfortunate man who had met his fate, the others clamoured for revenge. They would have it, if they all fought him. Atherton had insulted the whole family, and had accepted a challenge from the whole of them.

The spectators, especially the gentlemen portion of them, rebelled at this. They would not see him expose his life again. The Galbraiths insisted. There was a great deal of fierce language used, some taunts; and Atherton, when he could get a hearing, expressed his perfect satisfaction, nay, his intention to comply with the desire of the Galbraiths, and meet the next brother; and not only him, but all of them, one after another, until they were fully satisfied.

At this heroic decision, the old hunter could find no words in which to express himself. He simply went and sat down on a stump near by, and gazed upon Atherton with a kind of wondering and dumb-founded admiration.

So preparations were made for a second duel. There was some murmuring, but no active opposition. Again Atherton took up his position, while opposite to him stood Bill Galbraith—a rather larger man, if anything, than his slain brother.

The Colonel was about giving the word, when Mose Galbraith interrupted. "Fair play is fair play, gentlemen," said he, with an appealing glance around the wall of faces; "and I say it is not fair play to have that old Jew doing that"—and he pointed with his finger.

The crowd looked round. There was Solomon the Jew, down on his knees in the grass, about a hundred feet off, and praying with all his might—praying, no doubt, for Atherton.

"It's not fair!" cried all the Galbraith party. The crowd, who were the arbitrators, looked puzzled. Some laughed. Some swore.

"I clar to Moses," said the old hunter, "if that don't beat anything I've ever seen. But you don't mean to say, you Galbraiths, that you are afraid of the petitions of a heathen Jew! You called him so yesterday, you know. Jim pounded him for being one."

The throng looked amused. It struck them as being a curious instance of "tit-for-tat" on the part of the pedlar.

"Go ahead, Colonel," shouted Mose Galbraith, sullenly. "But I say it's not fair, though."

It was evident that though the Galbraiths despised the old man, the fact of his praying against them awakened in their hearts a kind of superstitious fear; and it struck me that Bill seemed less firm and assured than his predecessor had been.

"One, *two*, THREE!" rang out again in the clear tones of Colonel Morgan.

And again a Galbraith tumbled—this time, however, not mortally wounded. Atherton came off entirely unhurt. He had fired decidedly before his antagonist.

"Hang it! can't you shoot quick?" screamed Mose, who had detected where the point lay. Both of them had fired in a perfectly fair manner, but Atherton just a trifle the quicker. "He fired *first*, you see."

Another Galbraith took his place—Tom: Atherton appearing to be quite as ready to go on as they were. The crowd began to be impressed, as if Atherton were a superior being to common men. "He means to shoot the whole of them," passed from mouth to mouth. And they now were fully convinced he would do it. The Galbraiths also began to share in the prevailing conviction. "There is nothing succeeds like success."

I need not go into further details. Tom Galbraith fell beneath Atherton's quick and steady hand, wounded like his last brother. Ned Galbraith was carried off the field, groaning with pain, his right arm shattered. There only remained Sam and Mose, the latter of whom had acted throughout as second to his brothers. At each successive trial the old Jew had thrown himself upon his knees, in our sight, and resumed his fervent supplications. The assemblage, from being rude and boisterous, had become serious and almost reverent. Although they would not have acknowledged it, the Jew's prayers, in

connection with Atherton's unvarying success, had impressed them very powerfully, and struck home to that feeling, religious or superstitious, which lies, one or the other, deep in every heart—and perhaps are frequently united. The old hunter no longer attempted to clasp Atherton in his arms—it was sufficient to stand apart in reverent wonder and admiration. And in the eyes of the whole crowd, that one slight form had become a personification of all that was heroic in daring and grand in achievement.

Mose and Sam Galbraith had aided in carrying their last wounded brother from the field, but they seemed to be a long time in coming back again, some individuals began to shake their heads, and question whether they would come at all.

At last one of their friends, a man known as a great gambler, came forward, and told Colonel Morgan that the Galbraiths had gone home. That they protested against all that had been done as unfair. That while they were always ready to fight any man, however skilful with the pistol, like men, they would not fight a Jewish praying devil into the bargain.

The Colonel smiled. "And so they refuse to vindicate, as they call it, their honour longer, do they? Well, gentlemen, what do you say to that?"

"They are cowards!" cried some voices.

"Nay, I can't say that I blame them," dissented the old hunter. "I think, in their place, I wouldn't come back to be shot at, either. Luck's again 'em, you see. Let me grip your little hand, won't you?" added he respectfully to Atherton.

Atherton held out his hand with a frank smile.

"Well, this is the curiousest little hand to fling four big men with! Stranger, may I call my next child after you?"

"Certainly," was the laughing answer. "My name is Louis Atherton. Let me know the time, and I will send him a silver mug."

"Come, Louis, we must be going," cried the Colonel.

But a crowd of gentlemen came up with their congratulations. "You are a splendid shot," said the foremost of them; "and deserve a barbacue for freeing us from this set of ruffians. What has happened to-day will keep them quiet for awhile: they will not be quite so anxious to take inoffensive lives. Hey? what is it?"

Some movement in the crowd was swaying the speaker. It was parting by common consent to make way for Solomon, the Jew. He walked, amid wondering, curious faces, up to Atherton.

"Thank you for your prayers!" said the young man, solemnly. "They put new force and vigour into my arm and into my heart."

"The blessing of the God of Israel was upon you," exclaimed the Jew. "As I looked toward you, I saw the gleaming sword of Gabriel playing like lightning around your head. Their bullets glanced off from it as from steel. Never again may you see old Solomon; but

remember, you are now the son, by adoption, of the kingly tribe of Judah. And always," he added, in a whisper, "wear on your bosom the talisman I have given you; it will never fail you in the time of need."

Shaking hands warmly with the young man, and bidding adieu to the Colonel and myself, the old Jew walked away into space. He must have died, as it is presumed, years ago. At least, I have never heard of him or seen him since.

The next departure was our own. Bidding good day to those whom he knew around us, and saluting the rest, Colonel Morgan rode off homewards, with myself and Atherton. How full of happiness we all felt, how full of happiness looked Rose and her mother! But the Colonel cut short the greetings, and carried us away to his library.

"Louis, I am impatient," he said. "I confess to some curiosity as to that secret which you promised to impart. What made you so certain, and it seems now with reason, of success? Why were you so sure that you could shoot quicker than the Galbraiths?—for that seemed to be your source of confidence. There were six of them, and the chances were six against you. Surely," he added, after a moment's pause of thought, "you could not have derived your faith and confidence from the Jew's talisman—the Opal?"

"I do believe in the Jew's talisman, and also in the Jew's prayers," replied Atherton, as a dreamy expression came over his face. "I felt uplifted in a very peculiar manner all through the duels, full of assured strength. It really seemed"—and here his voice grew very low and reverent—"as if some Mighty Arm was beneath me, upholding and sustaining me."

Neither of us ventured to answer him.

"But," he resumed, "I will acknowledge to you, my best of friends, that there was something more. You remember that angel-child being here, that little Taliaferro? She brought a book from the table to my knee—you observed it, no doubt—pointed to a passage, and asked me to read it. I did read it. It is a scientific work. You can read the passage for yourselves."

"But what in the world has that book——" the Colonel was beginning, when Atherton continued, as if unconscious of the interruption,

"That passage treats of the rapidity with which the will transmits its commands from the brain to the nerves and muscles. The part that particularly interested me was this, that other things being equal, a small man could always act more quickly and rapidly than a large one. The human electric current is by no means instantaneous in its motion, and the will of a small man having less distance to travel, would communicate motion, to the hand, for instance, an appreciable time sooner than the will of a large man to his hand. This is the explanation, it says, of the often-observed fact that small men move

so much more quickly than large men—it is not a matter so much of sluggishness on the part of the large men, as of size. They cannot help being slower in their movements."

We listened in silence. Atherton went on.

"Now I had frequently observed in my own experience, how much more rapidly I could move, on a sudden emergency, than many of my friends. I am small and slight, and very supple. Remembering this, I saw at once how true the explanation was. As for Jim Galbraith, that he was as slow and lumbering as such a giant would naturally be, I knew from what I had already seen of him. His brothers were all of the same gigantic build, and of course would resemble him in slowness also. I am quick, even for my size. I have the sudden spring of a catamount. You will not attribute my saying this to vanity," he added, his brow slightly contracting. "I would much rather be like you, Colonel—a bigger man."

"It would not have served your turn so well, it seems, if you had been, Louis."

"No. It appeared evident to me that, at close quarters, I must lodge my bullet in my huge antagonist before he had pulled, or at least while he was pulling, his trigger. This would derange his aim; and through my very audacity, I should triumph."

"And so," said the Colonel, "the explanation is merely a scientific one, after all."

"I said not so—and I think not so," replied Atherton, growing very grave again. "At the best, it was a great trial to my nerves; and, as I said, I felt sustained in a marvellous manner. I believe I was sustained. How came it to pass that my attention was called to that passage in the book?"

"Little Cecilia showed it you."

"Yes. That little Cecilia looks like an angel—may she not be under the influence of angels? All depended, perhaps, upon my seeing that passage—that one passage, of all other passages that the book contains. If the child had not come, I should not have seen it; and, humanly speaking, the plan of the duel, based upon the idea conveyed to me thus, and imparting to me self-confidence, was what saved me."

"Cecilia was brought by her parents," said the Colonel. "It was a happy accident."

"Are there any such things as accidents in the providence of God?" questioned Atherton. "Why did her parents *will* to come at that particular time? Who can tell? An impression, acting for future weal, big with the charge of events, comes into the mind. Where does it come from? From nowhere—or from God?"

But I have said enough in explanation. My readers can determine for themselves whether the triumph of Atherton was owing to Providence or to Chance. For my own part, I have not the least doubt, and never have had. We are told that there is a kind and merciful

Providence over-ruling even the fall of a sparrow. "And are ye not worth more than many sparrows?"

I left the hospitable home of Colonel Morgan the next day; and, in the mutations of this world, have seen no one of whom I have here written since. Atherton sent me a paper about a year afterwards, containing the account of his marriage with Rose; and I have heard of him repeatedly—as who has not—through the newspapers. For he has been so far a wonderfully prosperous and fortunate man. He has served with great honour in the field—he has been elected to high offices in his native State—he is reputed wealthy—I know for myself that he has a beautiful and loving wife—and I know that, with all this great fortune, he is a *good* man, a sincere Christian, striving ever to walk uprightly in the sight of Heaven.

And I confess to a superstitious belief in his gift—the old Jew's talisman, the opal of Solomon, the king. While he has that, I believe that he will continue to be successful, fortunate, and happy. If I live, one of these bright mornings I expect to hear it announced that Louis Atherton—though, of course, that is not his real name—has been elected President of these United States. And that he will make a good President, and give his utmost energies to securing the prosperity and happiness of thew hole Union, I have no doubt whatever. Yes, I have faith in King Solomon's opal. And whether the old fable, that opals are unlucky, may hold good in a general way, I know not; but I believe *that* opal, at least, to be a very lucky stone.

HENRY PETERSON.

THROUGH HOLLAND.

I LEFT Rotterdam one bright morning for the capital. We had a fine view of the town as the train steamed over the wide Maas. The new bridge, the docks, the harbour and shipping displayed themselves in all their magnificence. The usual points of Dutch landscape abounded. Dykes broad and narrow; for the most part covered with white and yellow water-lilies and flat green leaves. Red-roofed houses, trees and windmills, blended with the exquisite tone of the grass: all gilded and glowing in the hot sunlight. Snow-white swans with their young broods were swimming about, graceful and majestic after their kind. Now and again a long row of stiff cold trees, such as are often seen in Flanders and the more barren parts of France. Windmills, like the cows, were innumerable. The reader is by this time aware that windmills are a principal feature on Dutch territory. But the feature is beginning to disappear. The time will come when they will be as little seen in Holland as in other countries. For the most part employed in draining the land, they are being gradually superseded by steam works. The latter do better service and are independent of the elements. Fifty years hence this picturesque and characteristic object will have disappeared. In place there will be here and there, all over the land, small brick buildings and tall chimneys, like so many diminutive factories. Holland, so rich in windmills, does not possess a single watermill.

At the hour appointed, the train reached Amsterdam. This time I put up at the Amstel: in point of size and site certainly the chief hotel of the town. The oldest, and in some important respects the best, is the Doelen. The situation of the Amstel is not central: a fact in its favour and the contrary. At some distance from the principal parts of the city, it yet escapes the hot, noisy, crowded streets and perpetual chimes; features so unpleasant in this pleasant capital. The hotel is built in the new part of the town, on the banks of the Amstel. From its windows the view is extensive, even though much of it consist of clouds and sky. Right and left stretches the broad river. Barges and steamers are for ever passing up and down; the scene is one of constant animation. Men and boys, pushing along their barges with long poles, leave a long track of black mud behind them. But it soon settles down again, and the water, when undisturbed, is sufficiently clear. A bridge to the right spans the river, over which trams—for of course there are tramways in Amsterdam—and omnibuses roll all day long. Every few minutes you hear a whistle from a steamer or a shout from a bargeman, about to go through. Up goes the drawbridge, and all land progress is arrested. Each in his turn. A horn from one of these steamers

awoke me regularly every morning at four o'clock. Had the blower at those times asked a favour, I cannot conscientiously say that it would have been granted.

The barges are heavily laden. Hay, closely packed baskets of fish, large quantities of vegetables are amongst their various cargoes. Occasionally a refractory cow, perhaps going out of town for change of air, was tied by the horns to the back of a cabin; and objecting to the situation would plunge about and make use of its tail and its hind legs in a terrific manner. A broad canal stretches up into the country. Opposite, the Amsterdam Crystal Palace rears its somewhat pretentious head: a building devoted to any purpose that will come to it; from exhibitions and flower-shows to concerts. Beyond, lies the town, its steeples and domes and densely-packed houses. Altogether the scene is expansive, suggestive of fresh air. So far the Amstel Hotel is favoured above its rivals.

In some other respects it would bear decided improvement. Suffice it to mention one of them—the table d'hôte: undoubtedly the worst I sat down to in Holland in point of quantity, quality, and cuisine. The following is a detailed account of one day's dinner:—

Soup, a liquid consisting of little more than hot water, thickened and made sweet with arrowroot, or something of that nature. A few sliced carrots, to which sour herb, resembling sorrel, was added; strange mingling of sweet and bitter. We have enough of this in our lives, the sweets of pleasure and the bitters of pain, without finding it in our soups. Next, raw herrings, not cured, or salted, or in any way prepared, but gray, soft, and cold as when caught. Then, slices of coarse roast beef and potatoes, floating in an inch of fat. Still it was beef, and was made the most of. Then followed calf's head, consisting chiefly of the soft white brains, by no means universally liked. Next chickens, all skin and bone, as they must be at that season; and finally cold salmon and salad that would have been good in its proper place. Ten minutes' interval between each dish. The pudding was made of bread, and a schoolboy would have wept at the scarcity of plums. Unless the hotel mends its ways, those who are fond of a good dinner must avoid it. In the case of myself and my Dutch friend J., who had come to Amsterdam to meet me, it resulted in our dining more than once at other hotels. The table d'hôte at the Doelen was very good. But none was better than that of the Bible, where I had stayed during my first sojourn in Amsterdam.

The raw herrings alluded to are considered a great delicacy by the Dutch. J. was amazed at the want of taste that rejected the tempting morsel. He put on a look—not of despair as when I had asked him to accompany me to a dead city—but of pity or contempt. Henceforth I went down many degrees in his estimation. He assured me that when herrings first come in they sell for as much as a gulden apiece—one shilling and eightpence English money. The dealers

announce their arrival by hanging a large metal crown over their shop doors, made of leaves and gilded balls and little painted iron flags. If a dealer wishes particularly to honour a customer, as soon as the first batch of herrings comes in, he sends him a present of one fish. It is to be hoped the customer's family is not a large one—or that most of its members entertain a wholesome dread of the raw material. A lady to whom I enlarged on the subject, was unable to credit that in England we cook our fresh herrings. It is an unknown thing in Holland, and she declared her intention of trying the experiment.

One evening after dinner we drove into the suburbs to a small village called Diemen. The road led by the river side. The sun, sinking westward, gilded all things with his wand. A fresh breeze was springing up, grateful after a hot day. The trees rustled and whispered mighty secrets to each other. Here and there a wakeful bird sent forth a few sweet notes by way of a vesper hymn to nature. At length the village. We got down at the inn, and took coffee in the verandah close to the water. One or two boats came up, the rowers dressed not in flannel, but in what looked like white cotton. Their manner of rowing would not bear as severe handling as they gave their oars. Short, unequal strokes; tremendous exertions that must soon put them out of breath, and knock them up. They all landed at Diemen, and recruited themselves with new milk. One of them broke an egg into his milk, and after beating it up to a froth drank down the draught by way of restoring his exhausted energies.

After coffee we strolled into the village: a desolate little place, melancholy in the extreme in the approaching twilight. Outside many of the cottages a pair of wooden shoes awaited the pleasure of their owner, who had probably gone in for a friendly gossip and was not to be hurried. At one of these cottages we called for the keys of the cemetery, where J. had a family vault. The interior of the cottage was a picture for an artist. Scrupulously clean. Buckets and pans were ranged up against the walls in most artistic fashion, with bright brass jugs or bottles and churns. The old housewife was delighted with our admiration, and talked and chatted and ran on like a babbling brook. But her knowledge of geography was somewhat misty. She anxiously inquired if I were Dutch. If not Dutch I must be Chinese—not, reader, that I am copper-coloured or wear a pigtail. But for her there were only two countries in the world. Everything that was not Dutch must be "Chinese." In vain J. endeavoured to explain that the globe was composed of many nations, and kindred, and tongues. It was impossible to disturb her firmly-rooted conviction that the Dutch were Dutch and all the rest were Chinese. A little, dark brown woman, who might herself almost have passed for a member of the celestial empire. Her eyes were bright and intelligent. We had won her

heart by praising her housewifely qualities, and it immediately rose to the surface. At once she took in us quite a motherly interest. We might have been standing talking to her now, had we not carried ourselves off by main force. We left her in the middle of a long oration, and it is not impossible that she is going on with it still.

We passed through the fields and a herd of cows to the cemetery. One cow was delicately covered with a graceful sackcloth. Another seemed troubled with a bad attack of bronchitis. She coughed, and then gazed at us for sympathy, and then coughed again; for all the world like an old coquette. A third looked as if it would very much like to have a game at pitch and toss with us, but on the whole thought it too late in the evening for such gentle frolics. On the whole we agreed with her. We got to the churchyard, and climbed the bank, and went into the little spot where the dead await the last summons from their long sleep. It is raised above the level of the surrounding country to escape the water. This makes the ground valuable, and none of it is lost. The gravestones were nearly all flat, almost below the level of the ground. They were placed close together, row after row, scarce an inch of earth between them. The Dutch are sparing in their words and epitaphs. The old saying, "To lie like a tombstone," certainly never had its origin in Holland. For the most part they confine themselves to a simple record of the name of those who sleep beneath. By this means they avoid the absurdities and mistakes we sometimes see displayed in our English graveyards. Not long since, wandering into one of the cemeteries at the east end of London, I came upon the following original rendering of the well-known line:—

"As soft as downy *pillars* are!"

The cemetery in Amsterdam—to conclude this melancholy topic—was a place of greater pretensions. Here they have from first to fifth class, according to the rank of the person to be buried; so that although in death all people are equal, a good deal of distinction is made in their graves. One of these graves was original in its idea. A devoted husband had buried two wives, and their likenesses framed and glazed had been let into a niche prepared for the purpose in the upright tombstone. There was space left for a third portrait, probably destined to a third wife, could one be found courageous enough to attempt this almost prophetical fate. Failing this, the fond husband might himself fill the gap.

There was nothing so fanciful in the little graveyard of Diemen, where the dead rest away from the rush and roar of the great town: everything around them almost as still and quiet as they. We walked through it, and paid a visit to J.'s tomb, only to be distinguished from others by its name. Then back to the inn, and to Amsterdam by a different way. A dull melancholy road, gloomy and depressing in the fast falling darkness: here and there a house surrounded by a moat, grey and ghastly enough to suggest murders

and evil deeds belonging to this world, and ghosts and apparitions pertaining to the other. It was a relief to get back to the houses and streets and lights of the town, where we soon found ourselves in the midst of a very opposite scene.

This was the "winter-garden:" apparently as much patronised and frequented in the hot months as in the cold. From its popularity it may be reckoned amongst the institutions of Amsterdam. A portion of the garden is under cover of a glass roof. Lamps and gas jets are placed round and above in brilliant profusion. From the roof creepers are suspended in baskets, and their tendrils, obedient to the law of gravitation, fall gracefully downwards. Quite a magnificent show of flowers is ranged round the walls. The uncovered portion of the garden is open only in summer. For roof there is the sky, and for lamps the stars: eclipsed by the nearer and more brilliant lamps of earth. A few trees stretch forth their leafy branches—quite large and full grown. A grotto has been cunningly arranged with imitation stalactites, and lamps with green globes that throw a shade over the interior quite like snow and ice. Nothing is wanting to perfect the delusion but a real bear to growl, and show his teeth, and give a friendly hug to anyone on whom he may fix his affections. But the presence of the amiable creature is dispensed with. He may be seen behind the bars of his cage in the Zoological Gardens, where the thickness of the iron renders him a more harmless object of admiration.

Into this winter-garden people come in the evening, and take beer, and schiedam, and raspberry vinegar, and all the drinks most popular with the Dutch. Night after night it is crowded with people of all classes—amongst the men kind, at least. The Dutch ladies of the upper ranks do not come here any more than would their fair English sisters, though the place is quite respectable. Still, the good old rule of Noblesse Oblige must hold its own. They even look coldly upon the garden, as an allurement which takes their husbands from home when the latter might be much more worthily employed in gracing the domestic hearth.

Here, at the little tables, the people sit and talk and drink in a quiet, harmless, matter-of-fact way. You never see a game of chess or backgammon: the Dutch do not care very much for these things. You seldom hear loud peals of laughter, or see them fall into excited arguments. A constant buzz of talk goes round: each little group is occupied with itself or with watching its neighbours. About eleven o'clock, when the contents of a good many glasses have disappeared, they go in for a nice heavy little supper—another, but not sensible, Dutch custom—and then return home to bed and a phlegmatic sleep, perchance a nightmare. They who take supper at home will rise straight from a heavy meal and retire to rest—a doubtful rest, one would imagine.

But this winter-garden is by no means a bad place for a stranger

to visit. Here he will be able to study Dutch types and character, note how they amuse and conduct themselves in their leisure hours and moments of sober levity. Various were the types here to-night, of either sex and every age. Many were Jews, and it has been already observed that the Jews of Amsterdam are no more to be mistaken than those of other countries. There were other and more interesting though less remarkable types—pretty, bright-eyed, young Dutch women, who came in with their husbands and sat down quietly at a table, and looked as if this mild kind of recreation that repeated itself night after night was the Ultima Thule of their ideas of happiness.

The Dutch are also very fond of open-air concerts, and go in largely for them despite their somewhat unequal climate. We went to one of these concerts one evening in the grounds of the Crystal Palace. The place was lighted up with rows of small lamps, and the scene was quite foreign and fairy-like. The band occupied a covered stage or orchestra; tables were in the middle of the grounds, and wooden rooms were built round for those who avoided the night air. It was the first really good band I had heard in Holland. The second and last was on a subsequent evening, in the Park. Here, too, the people sat out in the open air, and listened to the music and drank to each other. Trees waved overhead, lighted up by countless jets of gas that threw a glare upon many faces and brought out the waiters in bold relief, as they rushed about from pillar to post, from Peter to Paul. In Holland, to attract a waiter's attention, they do not call out "Waiter," or "Garçon"—those two unpleasant mouthfuls—but simply make use of the word "Anehme," which means "order." A sensible custom other nations might well adopt. The band was excellent, and the people seemed to enjoy the music almost as much as they did their beer and schiedam and a yellow mixture concocted of all the seducing elements put together. The band finished up with the Dutch National Air, the people flocked away, the lights went out, and the park was left to the owls and the bats and the spirits of darkness.

One afternoon—it was a holiday—we went over to Haarlem. The scene at the Amsterdam station was not to be forgotten. A motley crowd, rough and rude. People fighting and scrambling, and demolishing each other's clothes in their endeavours to get into the train. Perfectly indifferent as to compartments, they pushed into first, second, and third class as it chanced to happen. The porters could do nothing. Were these people quiet, phlegmatic, unexcitable Dutch men and women? We were about to change our plans, when a guard came up and took us far down the platform, where things were quiet, and comfortably seated us. A couple of Roman Catholic priests shared the carriage.

We got to Haarlem at last, and the Hotel Funckler—the best in the place. The table d'hôte, which had just commenced, was a very

pleasant contrast to that of the Amstel. Later on we drove to the village of Bloemendaal, one of the most picturesque neighbourhoods in Holland. Many country houses were scattered about, and gave place after a time to thick plantations of trees and wild tangled copse, that seemed landing us far away from the haunts of man. Presently we passed the lunatic asylum of Meerenberg, the chief of its kind in Holland—an immense building, apparently without end, shrouded in trees, and looking so dull and desolate, so isolated and forsaken, it might well indeed be compared to a living tomb. Soon after we came to the ruins of the Castle of Brederode: extensive, substantial, red brick remains, once belonging to the counts of that name, one of whom took good part against the Spanish invasion. The view from the heights of these ruins was interesting. It was difficult to realize that once all this surrounding and productive land was nothing but a small sea, reclaimed by man's skill and perseverance. On one side rich pastures, with their herds of cattle, lay calm and tranquil in the evening light. Across there, surrounded by tangled copse and wild plantations, the great building of Meerenberg reared its gigantic head, a melancholy object when its destiny was remembered. Beyond, six miles away, a range of sand-hills quite mountainous for Holland, and little more than a huge rabbit-warren. Behind the hills, out of sight, lay the sea. On this quiet evening we could only picture it calm and tranquil as a lake. No dashing and roaring—no ceaseless surging. There was a depressing stillness in the air; the very trees were silent, and cast forth that intense feeling of gloom and depression known only to those of whom it takes possession with the first fall of gathering twilight. That awful, that mysterious SOMETHING that is not a dread, or an omen, or a presage of evil, yet seems a mixture of all; a sense of utter loneliness—of having lost one's life-anchor and drifting on some fearful and unknown sea: in a word, the extremity of desolation that, happily, few know anything about, and only passes away when the perfect darkness of night has once more restored to the soul its sense of sympathy with outer objects—when perhaps the stars come forth and the Queen of Night tips the trees with her silvery light and shimmers the waters, and the old man's face in the moon looks down upon you and seems to invite companionship. Then away with the twilight's weird influence, and hour after hour may pass in cheerful even if solitary converse with night and darkness.

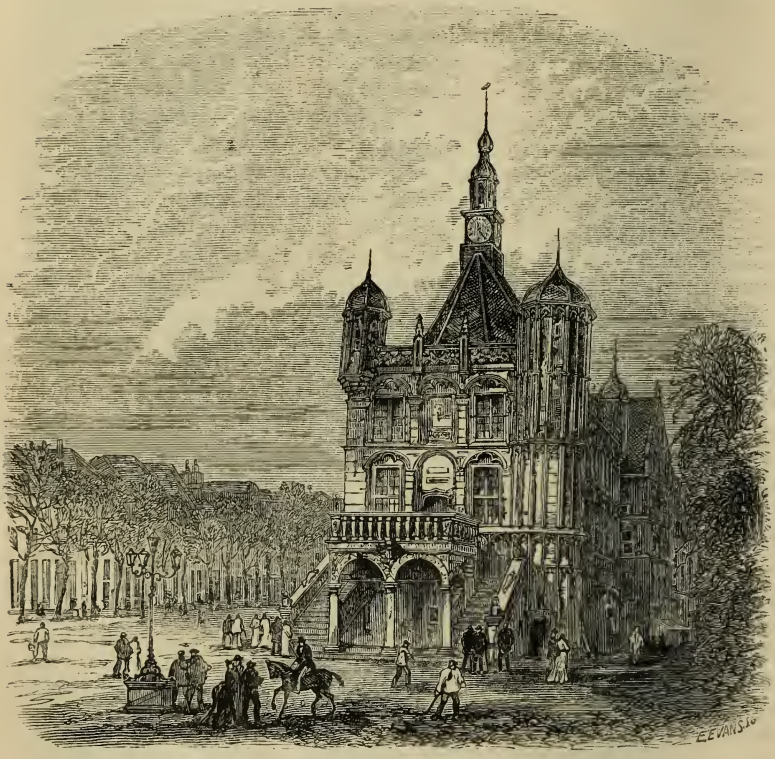
Returning to the station, it was impossible to avoid the feeling that, in spite of the beauty of the neighbourhood, it possessed something intensely melancholy and depressing. The last place in Holland I would choose for pitching my tent. We returned to Amsterdam in peace and quietness, and comparative solitude. The noisy and rougher elements would no doubt take the last train. Half-an-hour's comfortable travelling brought us once more within the shadow of the old capital.

We started one morning for Deventer, an old town of which I had heard great things. We were now travelling into Gelderland, Holland's most beautiful province. Here many of the rich Dutch have their country houses, and take refuge from the hot streets and terrible canals of the capital. Apeldoorn is one of the most popular of these places: one might almost call them settlements: and here the king has his favourite palace of the Loo. Starting at half-past eight, we reached Deventer at eleven.

On the road J. dropped his ticket into the window of the carriage door. In Holland, as in Germany, such accidents are guarded against by the bottom of the door being made to open with a key. This carriage, however, happened to be a new importation from Nuremberg. The fresh paint had hermetically sealed the contrivance. In spite of every effort it would not open. At Zutphen we had a twenty minutes' halt, and other forces were brought forward. Up came a couple of guards, and twice as many porters, and each had a try, and each failed. Then a solemn consultation, and a blacksmith was brought round, with a hammer and chisel and screwdriver. I looked to see whether the forge was following, with anvil, fire, and bellows. Then the chisel was applied to the door, and the hammer to the chisel; not too roughly, for fear of breaking the wood; and still it would not loosen. Then they tried the screws, and were proceeding to unfasten them, when I took the key and applied it to the lock. Whether I pronounced some such spell as unseals caves and discloses treasures, I know not; but the little door flew open, the ticket dropped out, and we carried it off amid the cheers and congratulations of the assembled multitude. We might have been coming into a million of money apiece.

Deventer can scarcely be called a typical or representative town of Holland. It is not characterized by the extreme quaintness, the general look of antiquity to be found in such a place as Dort. And here it may be remarked that only by going about to the various towns in Holland, and gaining personal experience, can you arrive at a just estimate and idea of those places that are worth visiting, and those that may be avoided. The Dutch themselves are very little, if any guide in the matter. The morning I reached Amsterdam, a Dutchman at the breakfast table ridiculed the idea of going to Dort. In his opinion I should find a day spent at the Hague far more satisfactory. So, on a former occasion, I had visited Zutphen upon the recommendation of a Dutchman I had chanced to meet. But I found little return for the trouble, save in the church, which contained a wonderful old room, small, but perfect of its kind. The ceiling was low and arched, and supported by carved stone pillars, bearing devices of death's heads and crossbones, and other less gloomy subjects. Old forms and desks comprised the furniture: and upon the desks were many ancient and ponderous tomes, some chained to the wood. These volumes were in various states of

preservation or decay. The moment you entered the cell, or study, as it may be called, you felt transported from the present day into the back ages. The forms became peopled with phantom monks, spending their lives in transcribing the scriptures; living in a state more or less of rapture in proportion to the love they bore their work. Here, at one of these very desks, Thomas à Kempis may have penned some of his wonderful thoughts of wisdom and counsel;



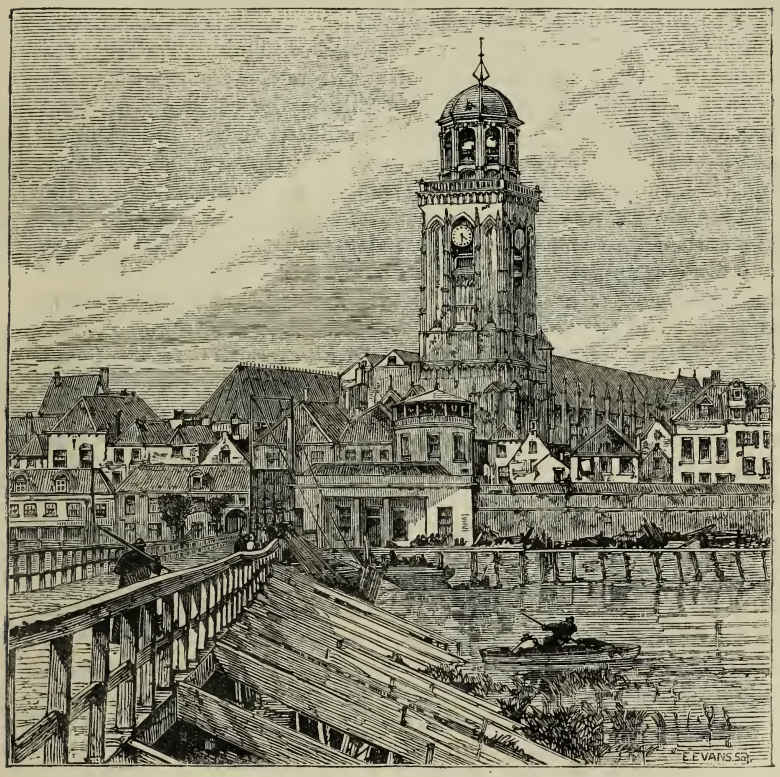
Weigh House, Deventer.

grown in those graces of humility and virtue he breathes in almost every sentence. It was such a room as one would rejoice to retire to, with a difficult or beloved task to accomplish. This was the chief reward for going to Zutphen; yet it had never entered into the calculations of him who had counselled the visit.

There was no such room as this in Deventer. Nevertheless, the town itself is, perhaps, more worthy of attention than Zutphen. I certainly spent the hours more pleasantly. At Zutphen I had been thrown upon my own resources. Its people seemed sleepy and behind the age, and were not posted up in ideas and information.

But here I was accompanied by one who knew every inch of the place, and piloted me about to perfection.

One of the most curious buildings is the ancient Weigh-house, which stands out boldly in the great square. In the old days, men of business were wont to meet here, and talk over the affairs of the nation at large, and of their town in particular. But that time has long passed, and it is now used as a gymnasium. In my innocence,



Old Bridge and Cathedral, Deventer.

I pictured an arena mounted with ropes and poles, and furnished with dumb-bells. I was soon undeceived. The word in Deventer means nothing more than a school where youths study and pass examinations. It is of Gothic architecture, dating back to the sixteenth century, quaint and curious, with its peculiar windows and unequal turrets. On the right wall of the building is suspended a huge old caldron—or kettle, as J. persisted in calling it—riddled with holes. In this an old coiner was, once upon a time, boiled to death. Beside it, carved in stone, is a copy of the caldron, the head of the unhappy victim peeping out, and looking as if he felt very

comfortable under the circumstances. So J. interpreted the design, whilst I somewhat differed as to its meaning.

The exterior of the town-hall is modern and uninteresting. It contains, nevertheless, a few splendidly carved old doorways, brought out into relief by the white walls of the vestibule; the latter being further adorned by the armorial shields and bearings of the old guilds. It has an extensive library and a somewhat imposing council chamber, with a few quaint old pictures; one of them by Terburg. Next to the town-hall is the police-office: an ancient and curious building of brick and stone, with gabled outlines. Towards the summit, in a niche, is the stone figure of a warrior bearing the town-arms on a shield. Immediately opposite is the cathedral or great church of Deventer: a long, straight edifice, dating back to the eleventh century, with a fine tower and three equal aisles. The interior is plain and unadorned, yet somewhat imposing. Upon the walls are one or two frescoes, brought to light by scraping off the whitewash. A great portion of the paintings came off in the process, and only two imperfect ones remain to be seen. One of these represents the resurrection. Some are going to heaven; whilst devils with horns and tails, and looking very terrible, are making off with others. A few are being shot into caves with yawning mouths, whence flames and smoke issue. The church also contains a very ancient crypt, immediately beneath the high altar; that portion where the deluded souls enter into the bonds of matrimony. The roof of the crypt is arched and supported by pillars of graceful design; also adorned with small frescoes.

Deventer is celebrated for its carpet factories, one of which we visited. Women and girls work away at the looms. Consulting the pattern hung before each, now one, now another, now all together, call out the next colours to be put in. Their harsh, shrill voices were sometimes deafening. The machinery seemed capable of improvement. The looms were clumsy. When a portion of the work had to be pressed down, one of the girls, going to the side, would seize a long projecting handle to which a rope was attached, and pulling it down with all her force, would let it swing her up into the air until her feet were flying about all over the place, a yard or two from the ground. Women and girls looked, for the most part, pale and unhealthy; the work is productive of ill effects, though in a degree far inferior to the cotton factories of England. Whatever the means, there is no doubt about the excellence of the results. Thick, rich carpets of Turkish and other designs, that last a century and are patronized not only by Holland, but by many foreign countries, England included. The foot falls upon them noiselessly as upon snow, and they yield with a soft, downy pressure.

In a certain café we were struck by a peculiar and ingenious cage. The unfortunate little occupant—a canary—had to draw its own water by pulling up a small bucket suspended by a string six inches

long. In like manner he could only obtain his food by dragging a little cart up an inclined plane, also attached to the cage by a string. Many a man gets his living more easily. However original the idea, it seemed something very like cruelty to animals.

Soon after this our time expired. We were to return to Apeldoorn, where J.'s people were staying at their country place for the summer months. The train went off, and the quaint towers of Deventer stood out picturesque objects against the background of the sky. In spite of waiting and all other obstacles, the nine miles of ground were safely accomplished in little more than an hour. At five o'clock we had reached our destination.

Apeldoorn is called a village, but is surely the largest village in Holland or elsewhere. Small country houses, each possessing a certain amount of ground, stretch out on every side. It is a pretty and picturesque place, answering to nothing we possess in England, both in aspect and arrangement. As already observed, we conceal ourselves in our country places from the gaze of vulgar curiosity Trees and shrubs, and winding avenues, and high walls afford us that aristocratic exclusiveness and secludedness that is so marked a type of the English character. We live to ourselves. Not so the Dutch. Here, in Apeldoorn, the houses are all built close to the road. Its inhabitants, sitting out in the verandah, reading, working, talking, or drinking coffee, may be seen by all passers by. Yet Apeldoorn represents the wealth and fashion of Holland. The houses look cool and pleasant, built for summer weather and hot days. Each house, for the most part, is constructed after the taste and idea of its owner. The grotesque style of architecture is nowhere visible. Chinese pagodas, Alhambras, Norwegian huts, Swiss châlets, and Turkish mosques are wisely avoided. The ruling and prevailing feature is simplicity.

J.'s place was delightful for the summer months. The house, without being over large, was convenient. In it you could breathe freely, and behind its outside and inside shutters find a retreat from the hottest sun. The rooms were not encumbered with furniture : the bedrooms had but a fragment of carpet upon the floor. Only by experience can be known the delights of a carpetless room in hot weather. The drawing and dining-rooms opened into each other by sliding panels large enough to convert the two rooms almost into one : a sensible arrangement for a house only occupied in summer. Glass doors opened on to the verandah.

There, in the cool of the evening, we sat and drank tea and coffee. Before us was a large lawn covered with a profusion of roses and other flowers that scented the air with quite an Eastern perfume. Beyond was a strip of water : in which, said J., he had lately discovered eels. So day after day he would go down with his rod and a novel, and throw in his line. Absorbed in the loves of Phillis and Corydon, he would presently raise his eyes to find the rod

floating away in the middle of the stream, at the mercy of a captured eel: a fish at one end, but not a human being at the other.

One day he raised them to more purpose. In front of him, on the opposite side the water, he suddenly saw an apparition of six youths with six rods, seated all in a row on the grass, and fishing away with all their might. They were staring at him with wide mouths and open eyes, immovable and dumb as the ghosts that appeared to Rip van Winkle in the enchanted mountain. After this invasion or trespass, which threatened to become serious, it was necessary to preserve the water and keep away the poachers with the aid of the police: a wholesome power and terror to the youthful population of all climes. It was a relief to find that the Dutch fry their eels.

There was a repose about the place, as we sat out that evening, especially soothing to one's nervous system. The air was soft yet refreshing, and is said to be bracing. The scent of the roses hung on the breeze. The place seemed steeped in stillness: a stillness that almost made itself felt: that is sometimes more to us than our daily bread.

One of the great charms of Dutch life, its chief characteristic, is its simplicity. A Dutchman will not materially alter his mode of living with the increase of wealth. The love of display, of spending money, is not one of his failings. Not so much, perhaps, from the love of the money, a wish to save and accumulate, as that he finds his happiness in quiet unostentation. An affection for everything that is simple and gives no trouble, is inherent: a part of his nature. Where an Englishman would launch out in display and all the luxury that wealth can procure, a Dutchman will continue in the same quiet, respectable, undemonstrative manner to which he has always been accustomed. His dependents will not increase in number, or his table groan under the weight of dainties. He dispenses often with a carriage, simply because he has hitherto done without it, and can do so still. There is no attempt to outvie his neighhour in magnificence. These ambitions are unknown amongst them. Their hours are almost universally the same. Breakfast at eight or half-past. Coffee and bread and butter: not a substantial meal as in England. About twelve o'clock, luncheon. This they call taking coffee: and when inviting a friend for this midday meal, it is always said, "to take coffee." It consists of that beverage, or wine and beer for those who prefer them, bread and butter, and a dish of hot or cold meat. Five o'clock is the general dinner hour. After this they take tea or coffee; and the last thing before going to bed many sit down to a heavy supper.

Such is the kind of life they lead. Simple in their ways and ideas. Infinitely pleasant and refreshing after the wealth and ceremony and display of other countries. It has its charming side. You will find amongst them refinement of feeling and cultivated minds, and a due appreciation of all things necessary to the higher life.

A Dutch lady will wash up her best china tea-things, rather than trust them to the tender mercies of her servants, in the presence of her guests, and put them away, and be as much of a gentlewoman, as refined and courteous, as a fastidious and highly-polished Englishwoman. In a somewhat different way, perhaps. But it gives to their surroundings that real atmosphere of home and homeliness: that sense of the good housewife looking after the ways of her household: that is so delightful an experience to live with. They live a simple, true life. They are what they seem.

The next morning we went to the Loo: a delightful walk under long avenues of fine elms, whose branches met overhead and shaded us from the hot sun. The palace, a large white building, is the reverse of beautiful in point of architecture. But the interior is fitted up with extreme taste and care. The furniture is handsome and regal, and so is the size of many of the rooms. Well-selected pictures of the modern school line the walls. Groups of sculptured figures in pure white marble are scattered about. The grand staircase is crowded with military and other trophies, that might well adorn the palace of a more warlike nation. The walls of the concert-room, immediately facing the entrance, are honoured by a medallion to the memory of Malibran: greatest of all singers. It is always gratifying to come upon any record of the genius of this most gifted, most sad life. Many marble figures were here, and one in particular excited our keenest praises. It represented a youthful coquette; in her hand a half-open fan, her head turned over her right shoulder admiring the long trail of her dress. It would be difficult to see a more exquisite piece of workmanship. The expression of the face, the pose of the figure, the folds of the gown, the conscious look of vanity and self-satisfaction, all wanted but life and motion to be perfect.

The grounds and gardens of the Loo are extensive and beautiful. Winding walks with over-arching trees, an immense extent of well-kept lawn, long avenues of elms, shrubs and flowers and hothouses in the greatest perfection, dusky sheltered spots and plantations delightful for picnics or whispered vows; lakes that in the gloaming would be a very paradise for a gondola and a sentimental pair, where love songs or the sound of a cornet would waft deliciously through the air. Every turn opens up a new and charming view. Near the old palace a long arch of trelliswork is completely covered with thick leaves and creepers. Here, at times, the king dines, exchanging the beauties of art for those of nature. There are miniature cascades falling into the lakes, which do their best to beguile you into the fancy that behind those woods great mountains rear their heads. Those who visit Holland should not neglect the Loo. It will form a day's pleasant excursion from Amsterdam: still nearer from Utrecht or Arnhem.

We returned in time for lunch, or "coffee." In the afternoon I left, with regret, my kind and hospitable friends. For the first time

for many days I was thrown upon my own resources. The journey back to the capital was long, hot, and, as usual in Holland, dusty. It was still daylight when we reached Amsterdam. More than ever, passing through the streets, I thought how narrowly it had escaped being the most picturesque city in the world. It can still boast of much. It is still wonderfully interesting, full of life and cheerfulness, with its trees and canals, and quaint old-fashioned outlines. I have never re-entered Amsterdam without being more and more impressed with it; whilst lamenting what might have been its more glorious destiny. I left it the next day for Flushing feeling that, opportunity given, I had not said farewell to its attractions for ever.

CHARLES W. WOOD.

MY LADY'S GEMS.

THESE are the gems my lady wore,
Brightly they gleamed as she entered the door:
This diamond, starlike, flashed in her hair,
These pearls encircled her throat so fair,
This ruby gleamed on her small white hand,
This emerald clasped her waist in a band;
A large gold cross hung low at her side,
Yet on her face was no trace of pride;
Her dark eyes shone with a radiance bright,
As she stood like a queen in that hall of light,
Causing a hush, a sigh, and a start,
And a breathless wonder in every heart.

These are the gems my lady owns—
Costlier even than precious stones;
Love, that through sorrow would burn more bright
Than the diamond star in her hair to-night;
Virtue, as pure as the snowy pearls
That coiled, half-hidden, among her curls;
Deeds, that around them such lustre shed,
Shaming the glow of the ruby red;
Hope, with the emerald's steadfast ray,
Shining more clear to the perfect day;
Faith, in the Cross that for sin atones—
These are the gems that my lady owns.

PLAYING WITH EDGED TOOLS.

"ISABEL, you do not know how glad I am to see you!"

"And I you, my little Dora."

They stood gazing at one another, these two cousins, not having met of late. Tall, shapely, elegant, as an Isabel should be, stood the elder; her violet eyes, her faultless teeth, and her perfect features making her the belle of whatever society she might be launched upon. The mixture of hauteur and vivacity in her manner but enhanced her charms, and Brillwater talked of the beautiful Miss Blake.

Dora Lechmere was different. Her manners were gentle, her brown eyes shone with an earnest light, her face was one you liked to look upon. Many people would have said she was better-looking than her cousin; the face might be less brilliantly beautiful, but it was more winning.

Isabel had been already staying for some weeks with her aunt, Mrs. Lechmere; Dora had now been invited to join her, and had had arrived to-day. But Dora had stayed at Brillwater the previous winter, and knew more about the place than Isabel. As to the temperament of the two girls, Isabel's might be said to verge on the tropical zone, Dora's kept strictly to the temperate.

Cui bono? Death comes but once. And over temperate as over tropical skies storms can arise that bring their bolt to strike their hurricane to drive the wreck upon the rock.

The cousins stood in a bedroom that must have been at the top of the house, for the ceiling on one side of it sloped; so, until you got close to the windows, and the intervening roofs and streets came in view, you saw nothing but a broad expanse of sea—gleaming this afternoon in the beauty of September sunshine.

The room, it must be confessed, was somewhat untidy. Upon the bed some evening dresses reposed; on one chair was a white satin slipper, with a coloured rosette sewn half on; on another, a complete morning suit of yachting cloth, flung down, as when just taken off, in a heterogeneous mass, with a hat to match upon it: on one of the window seats lay a hair-brush, with other stray articles that had no business there.

An old-fashioned looking-glass in a handsome frame was fastened on the wall behind the toilette table, and on that table and elsewhere were several pretty things. But the prettiest things to be seen there, after all, were the two young ladies.

"Now, don't look at the room," said Isabel; "it is untidy to its very foundations, and I had meant to have a grand clearance of it before you came; but then I went out bathing with those Roper girls,

and was barely back in time to be ready for that blessed morning drive that aunt will take—so there it is! Besides—let alone the fact that, until I marry and am rich enough to keep a maid, I never shall have my things in order—Brillwater is the worst place I ever was in for dressing in a scramble, and leaving out one's boots on one's bonnet or something equally bad."

Dora smiled. She had had to scramble herself in the matter of dressing at Brillwater: and she remembered the young ladies spoken of.

"Do you *like* the Ropers, Isabel?"

"Not the least in the world—tiresome, silly things! I don't see much of them; that's one comfort."

"Nor did I. But, Isabel, you never wrote and told me all you were doing, and I wanted so much to hear."

Isabel laughed evasively. "Who ever writes in Brillwater? And to any one who knows the life led here, what is there to write about? It is but repetition—ball and promenade, whist, and lectures from Aunt Lechmere. *What* did you want so much to hear?"

"Oh, a hundred and fifty things! I knew all the people you know."

"'A hundred and fifty things!' Modest request! However, we will make up for it now. There have been enquiries enough after you to make you quite vain: 'When was my charming cousin coming back?'—'What news did I get from the much-lamented Miss Lechmere?' I soon found I was only welcomed for your sake, Dora; that my glory was but a reflected light."

"Nonsense, Isabel"—with a blush.

"Is it nonsense? I was always being asked about you."

"Who were they—those that asked?"

"*Who?* There you go again! With all the hosts of people here, am I to make you out a list? I'll begin at the lowest end, I declare, if I do—with the bathing woman, who said: 'Shure and are you own cousin to that swate young craytur—the best customer in and out of the wather I have had this year! Thin it's the dozen tickets ye'll be taking of poor old Molly Malone!' And I bethought me of my father's Irish blood, and of course took them, although I knew that your visit was in the winter, and that you never could have bathed once with the old impostor."

Both girls laughed.

"The milingtary—as Mason calls it—were not behind in remembering you, although I see you are too modest to ask about them," went on Isabel. "Messrs. Tillotson, Crewe, Hudson, Blair, Major Campbell, Major Lindsay, Colonel Gore—you knew most of them, I think?"

"Yes." But Dora turned away to the window as she answered,

"Then they all asked; and others asked. You must give me breathing space before I think of any more."

"Which of these is to be worn to-morrow night?" said Dora, pointing to the dresses on the bed.

"Whichever you like—though I don't know who has been telling you that either will be. An equal amount of small renovation wanted to both! What a mercy it is that I have an inherent turn for millinery! Now, if I got Mason to do this, that, and the other for me perpetually, I should have to 'remember' her unconscionably when I go away. I could not well afford a new dress this time; but one might have thought our beloved aunt would have seen the propriety of coming to the rescue."

"Then I shall outshine you all to nothing," said Dora, laughing, "for mine has never been put on. I got it for the Turners' ball —that did not come off?"

"Were you much disappointed?"

"Not an atom. I was so glad to have the dress fresh for coming here."

"Hum! So that's it, is it?"

"Yes—you see, of course," added Dora, hastily, "here I know everyone. It makes all the difference."

"Very probably. But we must go downstairs now, or the aunt will be getting fiery. By the way, I wonder I don't hate you outright by the way you have been talked *at* me!"

"By Aunt Lechmere?"

"By no one else. What made you spoil her as you did?"

"Spoil her! I did not know I had even pleased her."

"Oh yes, you behaved like a good child always. Now, I stay out late on the promenade and have to be fetched in, and Heaven knows what besides."

Neither of the girls abounded in riches—as may be inferred from the above hints. Isabel was the daughter of a half-pay officer, whose means were small and sons many. Dora's father, Dr. Lechmere, had a large country practice, and an equally large family to provide for, and Dora did not get much of an allowance.

Their mutual great aunt, Mrs. Lechmere, had bestowed little notice on these girls for years. They were her late husband's relatives: she had none of her own. She was very rich, and very selfish. Upon the sudden departure of her companion the previous winter, she had bethought herself of Dr. Lechmere's eldest daughter, and sent an invitation to her. The young lady might be useful in accompanying her in the carriage, in writing her invitations, and in making up the whist-table when one was lacking.

Dora arrived, and found favour. Mrs. Lechmere was not insensible to the charm of bringing out a pretty, ladylike, gentle niece, whom all Brillwater praised and admired. So the girl stayed on; stayed a few months, nothing loth—for she had learned to love Brillwater with more than a common love, though Mrs. Lechmere suspected it not. Under the spell of this delectable time, Dora became prettier and brighter than ever she was before.

But April came, and Mrs. Lechmere took her annual flight to London, and adieux were made and 'coming again' promised. Her aunt said so, certainly she should be very shortly asked again.

Having once taken the plunge amid her husband's relatives, Mrs. Lechmere felt disposed to amuse herself by exploring them farther.

With a delightful lack of what some girls might have known to be worldly wisdom, Dora had never ceased to sing the praises of her cousin Isabel, Captain Blake's daughter. "If you would but invite her, aunt, you would see how nice she is—she comes to stay with us sometimes," she had said to Mrs. Lechmere. And when the summer came, and Mrs. Lechmere was back again at Brillwater, she had sent an invitation to Isabel, but none to Dora.

Isabel arrived, bounding over with delight at her good fortune in getting the chance. Being a few degrees handsomer, merrier, more generally attractive in society, she became even more popular than Dora had been. How different the two girls were at heart, chance acquaintances could not know: the one so unselfish, so true, so faithful; the other caring for little but her own pleasure and advancement. The one might have been capable of any sacrifice, the other of sacrificing to herself the world.

But Dora, at her own home, had not seemed so well as usual this summer; she became subject to fits of absence of mind, spiritless and pale. Her one wish seemed to be to get news from Brillwater; and Isabel, absorbed in the gaieties of the place, never wrote. Mrs. Lechmere, somewhat suspicious perhaps that Dora's heart had been left at Brillwater, drew her husband's attention to the fact that she looked ill. Doctors' children are proverbially exempt from medicine, but Dr. Lechmere believed in change of air, and Dora was sent forthwith to visit some relatives at York, whereat being as short of faith as are most of us, she inwardly rebelled with tears.

But when the York visit was over, Dora strayed westwards—for Mrs. Lechmere, hearing that she had not seemed well, invited her to Brillwater. And the very air and atmosphere of the place, though she had not yet been an hour in it, appeared to have restored, as if by magic, the light to her eye and the colour to her cheek. Who could be spiritless by the laughing waves of Brillwater?

"And what has been the matter with you?" asked Mrs. Lechmere of Dora, when the two girls went down to the drawing-room.

"Nothing, aunt."

"Nothing!"

"At least, not much," added Dora, striving to hide the blushes on her face. "Mamma thought I was pale, and papa sent me to the Littles at York. They are always inviting me."

"You look rosy now, young lady. Shall you be well enough for to-morrow's subscription ball?"

"If you will please to take me."

Lucky for you I've been able to get an extra ticket, they've been

all snapped up. You will find the greater part of your friends here still. Some of the officers we had then, by the way, have migrated to the West Indies."

Dora's heart gave a great bound, and then stood still. Was *this* the reason of his silence? "Which of them have left, aunt?" she asked aloud.

"Which of them? Oh, several. Isabel is much better up in those matters than I am—and I hear the visitors' bell."

This was scarcely true, since Mrs. Lechmere was the best authority in Brillwater as to who had come and who gone; but she never cared to enter on any task that gave her the slightest trouble. Dora had been away quite long enough for her aunt's liking for her to have waned. She had been asked to Brillwater now from a suggestion dropped by Isabel. Isabel liked her cousin, different though they were: and she had no objection that Dora should see her popularity and conquests.

The visitors, now entering, happened to be strangers. Dora joined little in the conversation, but went on steadily with her wool work. Very pleasant memories, very pleasant hopes were worked in with those stitches. Once again in memory, a hand held hers for a moment or so more than necessary, and with a pressure unforgotten still, although six months had passed away since then. Handsome, insinuating eyes were looking into hers, and a voice kept saying in an undertone, "You *must* come back to Brillwater; we will not let you go at all, unless you promise to come back;" and she had promised "yes, if it were possible." And now she had come back, and she found that he was *not* one of those who had gone to the West Indies; he was here still. Isabel had just mentioned his name, and ——

It seemed quite a nuisance when the footman's voice announced some people whom she knew; and she had to lay aside her reverie, or at least put it in the back ground while she talked to the newcomers.

Isabel, meanwhile, worked gallantly at the visitors, and many came that afternoon. She was very popular with ladies as well as men. Old dowagers tapped her on the shoulder for a naughty girl, with much approval; young girls were ambitious of her friendship; rivals and secret foes thought it better, as her wit was known to be tolerably sharp, to speak her fair.

She chatted merrily on, gave a heedful ear to old people's stories, lent patterns of dress and work with a generous hand, administered tea with a laudable attention to individual tastes for sugar and cream, and did everything but keep still. Only when they had all gone except one old lady—who was in private colloquy so deep with Mrs. Lechmere over the last pet scandal of the place, that the crests of their respective head-gear kept continually touching—did Isabel pause.

With the ladies last to go, she had some laughing words aside. It

had left the colour of her cheeks, varying much this afternoon, considerably heightened.

Now she turned to the window, sipping a cup of cold tea, with her eyes fixed in a set stare, as if she were spelling out some oracle written upon sky and wave.

"What are you thinking about, Isabel?" asked Dora Lechmere presently.

Then the blush came guiltily back, and a smile flashed out over all the handsome face. Turning, she pinched her cousin's cheek, and answered, "Nothing!"

II.

"I think Aunt Lechmere will actually go to heaven, after all!" said Isabel, bounding into Dora's room, which was inside her own, about twelve o'clock the following day. "She does not want to drive this morning, she says; and the doctor's coming, and they are always good for an hour or two's gossip. So what say you, ma cousine, to a stroll upon the hill?"

"I shall be ready in two minutes," said Dora, seizing on the proposal with alacrity, and plunging under a table for a pair of walking boots. In truth, neither of the cousins took a reprehensibly long time in making her toilette: and they set off.

The Hill, a pretty little elevation crowned with some old ruins, stood at one end of the town, and was a favourite promenade. Both the girls knew and liked it well.

Here were bathers come up from the sands below to dry their locks in the breezes, and flirt with the officers or their civilian brethren. Here sat a few invalids wheeled in chairs, most of whom were in the happy stage of enjoying gossip and life in general rather more than when in health. Here walked "young men and maidens, old men and children;" come to listen avowedly to the playing of the band, and in reality for as many reasons as Mrs. Hannah More gave for taking snuff.

Many a familiar group did the cousins find among them. Both looked very pretty in their simple but becoming attire; and they received a flattering welcome from all sides, and spent a fleeting hour. But hours pass away, whether fleeting or slowly; and they had to get back home for luncheon.

"Dear me, how my head aches with the sun!" said Isabel, impatiently throwing off her hat.

"I daresay you are tired," observed Dora, leaning on the banisters as she mounted the staircase slowly, just as though she were tired herself. "These morning rambles do fatigue one."

"Not always," murmured Isabel.

Luncheon over, they were left alone for a few minutes, Mrs. Lechmere having gone to her room. Isabel sat listlessly pushing back her luxuriant hair.

"Dora!" she suddenly exclaimed, "did you not find it very dead-and-alive on the hill this morning?"

"Why—yes. Very, as compared with what it used to be last winter. Perhaps the season makes the difference?"

"Oh, does it though! It is pleasant enough, sometimes, I can tell you. But so many were absent to-day."

"Not caring to fatigue themselves for the ball to-night."

"Nonsense. The officers are away—at least, some of them."

Dora caught up her breath. "How do you know that they are?"

"The Roper girls told me on the hill. A lot of them went over to the races at Toole yesterday, and did not come back last night."

"If they do not come back for the ball!"

"Oh, they will do that; trust them. But, what is it to you, ma petite, whether they come or not?"

"Oh, nothing," answered Dora, evasively.

"Well, you speak as though your heart were in your mouth," observed Isabel, keenly scanning her.

Mrs. Lechmere entered and no more was said. She sat down in her comfortable arm-chair.

"Now, Dora, where is the *Times?*" cried she. "Thank goodness you are back; for Isabel reads in so flighty and disjointed a way, that I have to make her sit with her back to the window to prevent her looking out."

Isabel burst out laughing, and shook her head at Dora: who settled down dutifully to leading articles of rather an abstruse kind, and to other matters in which she took no interest.

Mrs. Lechmere was corpulent in no small degree; she generally made, as to-day, a very substantial meal at luncheon, flanked by some exceedingly good old brown sherry; which sherry she did not press upon her nieces, advising them to keep to claret, as better for digestion. During this period of reading, therefore, she kept up a series of small naps; on awaking from which she, each time, rapped the table with her knuckles, telling Dora to read more distinctly. Isabel amused herself by watching the pantomime from the easy-chair, in which she was skimming a three-volume novel, indulging now and then in taking those long, out-of-window stares between whiles.

Mrs. Lechmere's health, in spite of the luncheons, was very good; her digestion—as sometimes happens with those who have kept their hearts through life at an habitually cold temperature—gave her but little trouble. Nevertheless, she exacted from her doctor an attendance of at least once a week. Presently he walked in, having failed to come in the morning.

As Mrs. Lechmere was queen of the lady gossips at Brillwater, so this doctor might assuredly be reckoned king, and it was even suspected that when facts failed him he was quite capable of adorning the tale with a little appropriate fiction. He considered his guineas cheaply earned by a few stock remarks on his patient's pulse; the

prelude to a good long confab of an hour or so, for Mrs. Lechmere was a shrewd woman of the world, and no dull companion when she chose to exert herself. The girls were not wanted, and ran up to their rooms.

"Now I'll tell you what we'll do," cried Isabel, holding Dora by the waist, "we will lie down on the bed and get up our looks and our strength for the ball. There's nothing to do up, and it's very stupid. Heigh-ho! I wish I could hire out the inside of my head for a while. Now and then it goes at a rate; now, leaving me no peace with the past; now, worrying about the future."

"I think," said Dora, polishing a pebble in a brooch that Isabel wore at her throat, "I should be jealous of giving up some of my memories."

"Well, there's something in that, too." And then there fell a pause, the girls maintaining the same attitude.

"Dora," said Isabel, at last, "it strikes me that somebody has got an attraction here at Brillwater!"

"I quite agree with you," retorted Dora, laughing. "I think that somebody has!"

"And this somebody's name is—Dora."

"And this somebody's name is—Isabel."

"Get away wid your blarney," cried Isabel, "taking the words out of my mouth like that! I have seen it ever since you came."

"So have I," returned the younger girl. "From the very hour I got upstairs here on my arrival. Look at your loss of appetite."

"Never mind my appetite until your own mends," said Isabel. "Your eyes were on all sides of the hill this morning looking for him. The question now is—will you confess?"

"Will you?"

"No."

"No!"

Isabel shook Dora playfully, as she laughed, and backed her towards her own door.

"There, go and lie down, for the obstinate little wretch that you are. I know the main part of the secret, and I shall soon find him out."

The girl went into her room and lay down on the bed, a medley of memories and hopes astir within her. A quarter of an hour, and Isabel softly opened the door.

"Are you asleep?"

"No."

"Then listen here! May I lie down by you? That's right; make room, Miss! You do not deserve it at all, but—I give in; I am come to confess. There *is* an attraction."

"Now, that is very good of you, Isabel. Although I might say, as you did, that I knew it all along. I felt sure of it."

"I only give in to a certain extent, though," added Isabel; "but I can't keep it in any longer. You will see him at the ball."

"Why not tell me who it is?"

"I won't do that. I will show him you to-night, instead. He will be there, and the probabilities are"—here Isabel laughed—"I may be dancing with him: and I will manage that you shall know which is the one. Now, surely, you will do as much for me."

"I will; I will, indeed, if he is there."

"Oh, oh! so you are brought to book at last, are you, Miss Dora. And oh! he *must* be there, and all will be delightful! I am so very, very glad, dear; so intensely happy. And now that I have begun, I will tell you all about me and mine from first to last, and what a blessed relief it will be! Not now; no, not now: to-morrow, after you have seen him. I should be kilt entirely, before setting out for the ball, if I began it."

"And you will be sure to make me understand which it is—you will be dancing with so many?"

"Be aisy. I will come up to you and say, 'this is Mr.——' ah, bother! I was going to tell you his name. We must fix upon a password."

"Suppose you bring him to me after dancing, Isabel, and say—well, you might say something about September balls being better than winter ones."

"Yes, yes, that will do capitally," said Isabel, "I can easily make up something that he won't suspect. And now what will you say when in turn you present to me your cavalier?"

"I might say 'If this ball is to be the last rose of summer,' at least it is a great success."

"How good! Your brain is more fertile than mine. But, look here—you might tell me just this: is it an engagement?"

"No, not quite that. Not in words; at least, not actually. I thought—I thought perhaps he would have written—or come."

"But there's no doubt he means it?"

"No doubt," softly murmured Dora in answer. "I think there cannot be any doubt of that."

And thus they talked, as light-hearted girls will, instead of resting. And the eventful evening drew on.

III.

THE Assembly-rooms at Brillwater were brilliantly lighted that night. The ladies cloak-room presented a remarkably pretty sight. If half-veiled charms be ever the most attractive, the opera-cloaks, half on, half off, here revealing a round, white arm, fettered with brightly-glancing jewellery, here a soft shoulder emerging from mysteries of lace and velvets, only enhanced each wearer's charms. A side door, opening for a moment, disclosed a sight of the ball-room. Isabel caught one glimpse into it; a bright smile of satisfact on lit up her face as she turned to Dora, who stood fastening her gloves.

"Come," she said, "I think it is going to be a very pleasant ball."

"Oh, stop yet a moment!" pleaded Dora. "Have you ever felt, Isabel, that happiness—I mean wishes realised at last, made one feel frightened? I seem to have no courage left to face them all—and yet I have longed so for this moment!"

"Never fear; it will be all right after the first plunge. Take courage; and don't forget the 'last rose of summer.'"

"I wish I could forget it at this moment! It would help me more than anything."

"Then forget it straightway! 'He either fears his fate too much, or his deserts are small,' who does not say something or other: I forget what now. So cheer up, and come along."

"Now, my young ladies, am I to wait for you all night?" called their aunt, who had only that instant been released from her maid's hands. "When I was young, I never troubled my chapéron in going to a ball, it was only in coming away I had to be waited for."

"Ah, then, that is so lucky, auntie," said Isabel, "you will have all the more sympathy for us to-night when we want to stop for the extra dance. Come along, Dora, I say: Aunt Lechmere is leading the way like a general going to battle; let us follow her to the death!"

Progress was not altogether easy. The dancers were promenading after the first quadrille, and it was difficult to get a general survey of the scene. But when Mrs. Lechmere anchored in a seat placed expressly for her near the top of the room; people crowded up. Dora was welcomed back to Brillwater by many old acquaintances, and got sundry names put down on her card while the music was tuning up, finally starting off in the waltz with young Lieutenant Tillotson. Isabel watched her narrowly, wondering whether he was the hero. Her own heart was beating.

"Our dance, I think, Miss Blake."

With a hurried word and smile, she put her arm within that of Major Campbell. He was a remarkably good-looking man, rather fair in complexion, with a smile as sweet as a woman's, and an eye that could caress, and plead, and speak at will.

"Yes, our dance," murmured Isabel. "But I thought you were not coming to claim it. Why were you watching me from a distance?"

The question was not answered. They had some ado to make their way amid the waltzers.

And the evening went on. Isabel gave Dora a laughing shake of the head now and again, in secret reference to whatever cavalier she might then be dancing with, but they had not met. The denoument was, however, at hand.

Dora had been taken to her seat by a partner, who had departed with a bow, thinking Miss Lechmere evinced less capacity for conver-

sation than she had done last winter, when up the long ball-room, full in sight, came Isabel on Major Campbell's arm. They were a couple that the eye might well love to linger on, so tall, so handsome, so distinguished. Dora beheld them from afar, and her hands met and tightened their grasp nervously one upon another. Often in her dreams, afterwards, she saw that ball-room scene, with those two figures advancing towards her; only, ere they came quite close, she would waken with a cry of resistance and distress.

Now, in real life, she remained perfectly quiet, outwardly unmoved, but her heart was throbbing painfully, as if hampered by some pressure of suspense. How thankful she was that no one spoke to her just then! A strong presentiment, a curious apprehension, mingled with that suspense most terribly. They reached her, and her hand was taken by Major Campbell. Did his eyes shrink just a little in meeting hers?—or did she only fancy it?

"You are in so much request, Miss Lechmere, one can hardly get a chance of welcoming you back to Brillwater."

"Yes, has she not been busily engaged—dancing with everybody!" exclaimed Isabel. "Why, Dora, you must confess that *September balls are quite as good as winter ones!*"

"I really think I must," replied Dora: and she joined in her cousin's low laugh. Major Campbell stood for some minutes talking with them, and then strolled away. Isabel touched Dora's hand with a pressure.

"Not a word, *now*," she said. "But what of le votre?"

"He is—not here."

"Oh, but I am sorry! it takes away half my pleasure. What! these lancers already, Major Lindsay!"

She went away laughing—how soon she seemed to have forgotten! Dora was left sitting alone.

Not here! Oh, no, never would he be here again. Only a memory from the past to haunt her. To haunt her evermore with its falsely beguiling smile.

"Pshaw!" cried its owner fractiously, "I daresay she—she thought nothing. It was but a flirtation, all said and done." "Was it?" returned that troublesome conscience. "You wooed her, and you knew it, and there was trust given back to you, and you were over-earnest to win what you were not faithful enough to care to keep. A sore heart, a disappointed faith, lie of a surety at your door to-night!"

When the ball was over, and the girls were at home again, and dresses and wreaths discarded, Isabel sat on the floor at Dora's feet, half hiding her face on the lap of her cousin. She made her full confession; for she had promised that night to be Major Campbell's wife.

"You did like him last winter, Dora, did you not?" she said. Every lady likes him, and he deserves it. *Please* say you like him."

"Yes, yes. Rest quite assured I like him, Isabel."

"Thank you, cousin mine. He says he fell in love with me at once; that he had never before seen any one he in the least cared for. I am so proud and happy: and yet I feel a desperate kind of humility quite new to me. Even Aunt Lechmere might do with me what she would. Do you know, although I was so disappointed for you, poor darling, it gave me a momentary relief to hear your friend was not there? It has occurred to me that we were playing rather a dangerous game. *Suppose we had both loved the same man!*"

"Ay, suppose that!" gasped Dora.

"And now you will tell me all about him, as I have told you —his name; his——"

"Listen, Isabel," interrupted the unhappy girl—and her voice sank a little before the conclusion of the sentence. "You must promise never, never to ask me anything about—about him again. I heard something at the ball to-night which makes it all over between us; quite over. I must not think of him; and——"

"Surely he was not one of those who went to the West Indies?"

"I—I—believe he was. Yes—one of those."

An hour later, when Isabel, in the next room, had dropped to sleep with a smile upon her lips, a poor weak human soul lay struggling with a cruel suffering, treading low in the valley of sorrow and humiliation. There was a white lie for which she stood accountable; but *that* sat lightly upon her conscience; it was a lie that might almost have served as a passport into heaven. No, it was the lot of all, according to Goethe; but it came to her in one concentrated blow, that seemed to tear her very soul in sunder, and leave her *prostrated.*

"Thou must go without, go without!"

One day, years afterwards, a confidential friend was talking to Isabel Campbell, long since a happy wife and mother, of Dora Lechmere.

"It is strange, very strange, that one so good and attractive as she should never have married! I may be mistaken, but I always suspected something went wrong the year she was at Brillwater."

"Yes, it all took place at Brillwater. Something—I never knew what—came between her and her lover; and he went to the West Indies."

So spoke, so thought Isabel. Perhaps her husband, Colonel Campbell, could have told a different tale.

MINE AND COUNTERMINE.

IT was on a raw November evening in 1869, that a spare, hook-nosed individual, bearing in his hand a small valise, entered a café-restaurant in the immediate vicinity of the Gare du Midi at Brussels. The atmosphere of the one long room which occupied the ground floor was strongly impregnated with tobacco, and the majority of the customers were either workmen in blouses, smoking clay pipes, or railway porters. At the farthest extremity of the salle, a few tables were scantily decked with coarse napkins, plates, and black-handled knives, the whole of the commonest order, and not peculiarly inviting in point of cleanliness. The stranger, lifting his hat as he passed the counter, made his way to the end of the room, and seated himself on a horsehair bench placed against the wall, and commanding a good view of the entire locality.

"I may as well dine here as anywhere else," he said. "Perhaps something may turn up."

After a brief conference with the solitary waiter, the new comer proceeded to while away the interval necessary for the preparation of his repast, by a leisurely examination of the taciturn smokers around him. A very cursory glance, however, at the different groups seemed to satisfy him; and he concluded by installing himself at one of the tables, took a note-book from his pocket, and was soon absorbed in its contents.

It may be remembered that about the period in question, the circulation in France of M. Rochefort's *Lanterne* had been for some time rigidly prohibited; but that, notwithstanding every precaution taken at the frontier, several hundred copies of this pungent squib, more than one of which had been published in Brussels, had found their way through divers channels into the very heart of the Empire. In vain were suspected travellers searched, both in baggage and in person; in vain were the cleverest emissaries of the Rue de Jérusalem quartered at the various douanes; the invasion of the mischievous little pamphlets still continued, and the Préfecture de Police and its myrmidons were alike in despair.

Now it happened that one of the sharpest and most lynx-eyed emulators of Gaboriau's redoubtable Monsieur Lecoq, by name Etienne Brigaud, had been summoned from Paris to Lille, and from thence dispatched to Brussels respecting a case of disputed extradition, and, his mission successfully accomplished, was awaiting the departure of the half-past eight o'clock train, by which he purposed returning to Lille. "Keep your eyes open," had been the parting injunction of the commissaire; "before leaving Brussels see Chaponet, of the Belgian police; you may trust him. Ascertain how many copies of

the last *Lanterne* have been sold, and to whom; and bid the people at Blandain be on the alert, for I have positive information that they are smuggled into France that way."

M. Brigaud then it was who, pending the arrival of his dinner, sat conning over the particulars he had gleaned from his colleague Chaponet, which, in fact, amounted to little or nothing. "Not much to be learnt from that quarter," soliloquised the detective, with a contemptuous air, pocketing his note-book, and swallowing his first spoonful of a so-called Julienne. "Hollo! who have we here?" added he, glancing curiously at two new comers, who at that moment entered the café, apparently man and wife, and both well laden with hand-bags and other travelling appendages.

"Ah, bah!" muttered M. Brigaud, with an impatient shrug of the shoulder, "des bourgeois, going back to Ath or Tournay, no doubt." Having arrived at which conclusion, he filled himself a bumper of wine from the bottle beside him, drank it off, and tapped with his knife on the empty glass as a signal to the waiter that he was in a hurry for the promised bifteck aux pommes.

Meanwhile the couple had taken their seats at an adjoining table, and after piling up their luggage and wrappers as symmetrically as the slippery bench would allow,

"Garçon!" said the male stranger, "deux bock, et vivement!"

"Sac à papier! they're French," murmured the police agent. "No Belgian ever asks for a bock, and I'm pretty sure there is no such word as 'vivement' in their dictionary! I must have another look at my friends yonder."

It is but justice to dame Nature to admit that if, as regards personal beauty, M. Brigaud's countenance left much to be desired, his small but penetrating grey eyes let nothing escape them, and his ear was so marvellously acute, that, like the servant in the fairy tale, he could almost hear the grass grow. While ostensibly engaged in demolishing his "bifteck," he was eagerly watching his unsuspecting neighbours, more, it must be owned, from pure habit than from any special motive; their conversation, however, was carried on in so low a tone that for some time the practised listener could not distinguish a single word. At length, the supposed bourgeois, turning to his companion, inquired in a sufficiently audible voice, if she were certain that "the books were well hidden?"

"Je crois bien," was her answer: "I defy anyone to guess where I have stowed them away."

"We'll see about that by-and-by, Madame," thought M. Brigaud, pricking up his ears.

"Would they confiscate them if they were found?" asked the wife.

"Parbleu!" replied her liege lord, summoning the waiter as he spoke, by a sharp tap of his glass on the table, and discharging the reckoning by means of a handful of Belgian ten centime pieces.

Then rising hastily from his seat, he seized hold of one of the hand-bags, threw a great coat over his arm, and followed by his wife charged with the remaining articles, quitted the café, and proceeded across the road towards the railway station.

M. Brigaud, who had been a silent but not an indifferent spectator of the foregoing scene, smiled significantly as they left the room. "Either I am very much mistaken, my good friends," said he, "or those traps of yours will tell tales when we get to Blandain!"

A quarter of an hour later, the mail train from Brussels to Calais was on the point of starting. The evening had set in bitterly cold, and a motley crowd of passengers just released from the waiting-room, and shivering under their manifold wrappers, were hurrying to and fro. Among them, quietly enjoying his cigar, and apparently on the watch for somebody, was the hook-nosed detective, sauntering along leisurely, but keenly investigating every carriage as he went by. Presently he stopped before a first-class smoking compartment, the occupants of which were two in number; and after a whispered intimation to the guard on duty that no one else was to be admitted, opened the door, and installed himself quietly in a vacant corner. In another moment the train was gliding out of the station.

Sitting opposite his fellow-travellers, who had appropriated to themselves and luggage one entire side of the carriage, and who, it is almost superfluous to state, were the identical couple whose temporary sojourn in the café has been already recorded, M. Brigaud maintained for some time a discreet silence. His reflections, whatever they might have been, were suddenly interrupted by the appearance of the guard with the usual formula, "Vos billets, s'il vous plaît!" a demand responded to on the part of the police agent by the display of a pass ticket for Lille, and on that of his female vis-à-vis by the production of two little rose-coloured pamphlets, bearing the inscription "Bruxelles à Londres;" from each of which the inspecting functionary dexterously extracted a leaf, and vanished as abruptly as he had entered.

"Brrr!" shivered M. Brigaud, as a rush of cold air made its way into the carriage. "You will find it unpleasant travelling on the sea, monsieur," said he, addressing his opposite neighbour.

"We have taken our precautions, you perceive," replied the stranger, wrapping a thick cloak closely round him as he spoke, and pointing to his wife, half hidden beneath a pyramid of shawls and rugs.

"I wish I could say as much," observed the detective: "I must have left my paletot in the café; I missed it as I got in here."

"If monsieur does not mind," interposed the lady, "we have a spare coat lying idle, belonging to my brother-in-law. It will keep monsieur warm at all events as far as Lille."

"Ma foi! the very thing," exclaimed her husband, dislodging the

article in question from a recess by his side, and tossing it on the opposite seat. "There," he said, "wrap yourself well up in that: it's a trifle too large for you, but you'll be all the warmer."

M. Brigaud, after a decent show of resistance, allowed himself to be persuaded, and was speedily encased in a ponderous garment of vast circumference, lined throughout with fur, and altogether extremely comfortable. "Very civil people these," he murmured, as he sank back complacently into his corner. "Sorry to be obliged to split upon them, but must do my duty!"

"Blandain! Blandain! Tout le monde descend pour la visite!"

At this unwelcome summons our three travellers, who had all been more or less in that hazy state of unconsciousness which has been happily defined as the "ante-room of Morpheus," woke up with a start, and hastily collecting their various goods and chattels, prepared to join the other unfortunates assembled outside the douane. Leaving his companions to wait there until their turn came, M. Brigaud slipped unseen into the building by a side-door, and taking the grim-visaged female entrusted with the examination of the lady passengers aside, communicated his suspicions to her, and after accurately describing the supposed delinquents, repaired to a back apartment, there to indulge in the luxury of a "grog au rhum." In about ten minutes the sound of a bell warned him that the "visite" was at an end. Messieurs les voyageurs, who had been huddled together in a narrow room, half passage half sheep-pen, were streaming out pell-mell, and endeavouring, as far as the uncertain light would permit, to regain possession of the seats they had previously occupied; an attempt which usually resulted in their being bundled in anywhere by the impatient guards. As the detective passed rapidly through the salle, he was arrested by the shrill voice of the female official, calling him by name:

"Ah ça!" she said, "what cock-and-bull story have you been telling me?—keeping everybody waiting, and giving me all this trouble for nothing?"

He started back "in amazement lost," like Sir Christopher in the "Critic." "What! you don't mean to say you didn't find the books?"

"Books! shouted the enraged dame; "what do I care about English books! They don't pay duty!"

"English books!" muttered M. Brigaud, as he hurried off. "I've put my foot in it nicely, this time; if they ever hear of it in Paris I'm done for!"

Once more in his snug corner he found his fellow-travellers in the highest spirits, detailing with infinite zest the discomfiture of the searcher, and imitating her grimaces as she extracted one after another half-a-dozen volumes of Tauchnitz' novels from Madame's capacious pockets.

"It was as good as a farce, Monsieur," said the lady, nearly choking at the recollection.

"Beat the Palais Royal hollow," chimed in her husband.

M. Brigaud listened as politely as he could, but his interest in the matter was over. At length, feeling that he was expected to say something, he inquired what could have been Madame's object in concealing them, as they were not contraband.

Here the husband and wife exchanged looks, and smiled.

"Not here, I grant you," replied the latter, "but in London that is quite another story. No, no; I have them safe in my pocket, and the English douaniers are too polite to look for them there!"

"Ah, ah!" said M. Brigaud, suddenly enlightened, "that explains what I overheard in the café," he thought. "Confound Chaponet and the *Lanterne!* I shall never dare to come this way again as long as I live. Clever woman, my opposite neighbour! I'd give something to see her walk out of the Custom-house là-bas with the books in her pocket!"

The idea of the London officials being taken in tickled the detective amazingly, and with the help of another cigar he gradually recovered his good humour, and chatted pleasantly with his companions, whom he ascertained to be commission agents established in England, and returning thither *viâ* Calais, on account of the short sea-passage, from a business trip to Belgium; until a succession of whistles and the periodical flickering of gas-lamps announced their approach to Lille.

"You stop here, Monsieur, do you not?" asked the lady, who had just whispered a few words to her husband.

M. Brigaud, at that moment engaged in divesting himself reluctantly of the comfortable coat, answered in the affirmative.

"I have a great favour to beg of you, Monsieur," she continued, "if it would not give you too much trouble."

"Say rather pleasure," was the gallant reply. "I am entirely at Madame's orders."

Madame signified her acknowledgments by a gracious smile.

"You know the Hôtel du Chemin de fer du Nord," she pursued—"it is close by; would it inconvenience you to leave the coat there for my brother-in-law on your way home? I am so afraid he may not think of coming to the gate."

"He shall have it in five minutes, Madame. What name shall I enquire for?"

"Monsieur Jules."

"Madame may consider her commission as already executed." And with many bows and mutual expressions of good-will, M. Brigaud took leave of his fellow-passengers, and, shouldering his valise, descended from the carriage and proceeded on his errand.

On arriving at the hotel, he found a stout individual standing at the door in conversation with one of the waiters.

"Monsieur Jules?" he began, addressing the latter.

"C'est moi, Monsieur," replied the stout man, looking hard at the coat.

"Monsieur," said the detective, "I have been commissioned to deliver this coat into your hands. You will pardon me, I trust, for having worn it during the cold journey."

"Comment donc! I cannot sufficiently thank you for your kindness. I was about to apply for it at the bureau, but you have anticipated my intention. Believe me, Monsieur," he added, in a tone of deep conviction, "I shall not easily forget how much I am indebted to you."

"Well," said M. Brigaud to himself as he walked away, "Who would think that I had only brought back a coat which didn't belong to me! They say we French are a polite people, and if my fat friend yonder is an average specimen of the nation at large, I suppose we are."

He had hardly disappeared round the corner of the street when the stout man, turning to the waiter, asked him if he knew the gentleman who had just left them?

"I don't know his name," was the reply, "but I have seen him more than once with the commissaire. He is a police agent."

"Diable!" said Monsieur Jules.

Meanwhile, the subject of this inquiry had directed his steps towards the Préfecture, and had been forthwith admitted to the private office of the commissaire, to whom he rendered a detailed account of his mission, and received orders to be in attendance at twelve o'clock on the following day. "I shall have looked over the extradition papers by that time," said the presiding functionary, "and you can return to Paris by the afternoon train." Whereupon M. Brigaud bowed respectfully, and retired to his lodgings in the town, where it is to be hoped he slept as soundly as a "mens conscia recti" could desire.

At the appointed hour he was once more ushered into the cabinet of his chief, no longer smiling affably as on the preceding evening, but frowning ominously.

"What is the meaning of this, Brigaud?" said he sternly, holding out a paper for the inspection of the agent. It was a telegram, marked "private," and dated that morning from Brussels.

"Read it aloud," pursued the commissaire. M. Brigaud obeyed, and read as follows:—

"Brussels, Thursday, 9.30.

"Yesterday twelve copies sold, sent last night by Calais mail train, sewed inside coat lined with fur. Bearers, two persons unknown. "CHAPONET."

During the perusal of this document he police agent's voice

trembled, and his face grew ashy pale. "Ah, les brigands!" he exclaimed, forgetful of the presence of his superior. Suddenly, a thought appeared to strike him, and before the astonished commissaire could make any effort to detain him, he seized his hat, and, without attempting an explanation, darted headlong out of the room.

In an incredibly short space of time he had reached the hotel, and grasped by the collar the luckless waiter, who was solacing himself with a pipe on the steps before the door.

"Where is the scoundrel?" he shouted.

"What scoundrel?" stammered the half-throttled garçon.

"Monsieur Jules, idiot! I must see him directly."

"What do I know about Monsieur Jules?" cried the waiter, rescuing himself with difficulty from his infuriated aggressor. "If you want him, you had better take the next train to Paris and follow him. He left here at six this morning."

"Ah, triple canaille!" exclaimed the baffled detective. "And the train arrives at eleven! Those infernal copies will be half over Paris by this time! Stay, garçon, who and what is he, this Monsieur Jules?"

"Dame, M'sieu," replied the waiter, "he didn't tell me who he was, but I saw one thing plain enough."

"Ha! what was that?"

"Why, M'sieu, I saw that he was uncommon glad to get his coat again!"

It was with faltering step and downcast mien that the police agent re-ascended the staircase leading to the private bureau, and so utterly depressed and woe-begone was his appearance that the commissaire stared at him for a moment in speechless wonder.

"Monsieur Brigaud," said he at length, "perhaps you will now have the goodness to explain the meaning of this unaccountable conduct."

"Monsieur," began Brigaud.

"Stay," interrupted the commissaire. "I will listen to your excuses presently. Answer me first; is this information," pointing to the telegram which lay on the table, "correct?"

"I am afraid it is," replied the detective in a scarcely audible tone.

"The twelve copies of the *Lanterne* passed the frontier last night."

"I—I believe so."

"Concealed in the lining of a coat?"

"Apparently," sighed the agent.

"Without suspicion being attached to any particular individual? Inexplicable!" murmured the commissaire. "The employés at Blandain shall answer for this."

"It was no fault of theirs," exclaimed the detective, unable to

contain himself any longer. "Tenez, this questioning drives me wild, and I had rather make a clean breast of it at once. Monsieur, I have been tricked, as police agent was never tricked before! I have laid a trap, and fallen into it myself. The entire occurrences of last night have been one enormous mistake, as you will own, when I tell you that the innocent wearer of the cloak lined with fur, the involuntary circulator of the *Lanterne*, was no other than ——"

"Who?" interrupted the commissaire, bending eagerly forward.

"Etienne Brigaud." C. H.

A MOTHER'S PRAYER.

A SHIP far out on a smiling sea,
With its snowy sails outspread;
Cleaving the waters merrily,
And a bright sun overhead.

It kisses the cheek of the sailor lad,
As he climbs to the mast-head high;
He sings at his work, for his heart is glad,
As he thinks of his home so nigh.

A cottage home where the roses twine,
And a mother in silent prayer;
And the self-same sun which on him doth shine,
Is gilding her silvery hair.

The lightnings flash and the thunders roar,
The waves they are mountains high.
No help on the ocean, no help from shore,
No light in the midnight sky!

A brave ship struggling with might and main,
And its white sails rent and torn;
It lurches and groans like a thing in pain,
And its mast is well-nigh gone.

A sailor clings to a broken spar,
And his face is wild and sad—
A mother prays in her home afar
To-night for her sailor lad.

Thy child is saved for that prayer of thine,
And the tempests wild they cease—
Over a cottage where roses twine
Hovers the angel of Peace! E. L.

M. ELLEN EDWARDS. J. SWAIN.

THE ARGOSY.

DECEMBER, 1877.

GABRIEL'S APPOINTMENT.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE WELL AT LOWLEVELS.

WE have described one experience of travel in Devonshire in the teeth of a south-west gale; let us look now at another, under a calm summer moon. The wildness of the storm, the beating of the rain, were the welcome which greeted youth and love in the persons of Joel Treherne and his bride; the cool night air, the clear sky, and the quiet moonlight, were reserved for a traveller of another stamp—one, to whom every feature of the scenery was only too familiar.

He had traversed thousands of miles, by land and sea, since his last visit to Level Bridge; but on leaving the railway at Longmorton, he at once struck across the country with a decision that showed how vividly it was stamped on his memory. Dressed like a French sailor, and swinging a stick with a bundle over his shoulder, there was little about him to recall the smart, obsequious courier of Naples and Pæstum. He was not sorry when he found himself at last at the gate of Widow Cheveril's cottage. The sound of voices, as of people coming down the garden path, made him instinctively draw into the shadow, whence he could see without being seen. Dr. Nelson was speaking of the old woman's condition to Mrs. Medland, whose voluminous comments he cut short by peremptory orders to give her the wine that would be sent; and another man's voice, taking up the subject, promised that the wine itself should be sent round directly by her son—if he was to be trusted. A burst of enthusiasm over the goodness of the gentlemen who had converted poor Bob, and saved honest, hard-working people like her and her husband, from disgrace in their old age, was Mrs. Medland's response; but before it was well ended, the friends, for such Frank Nelson and

Gabriel Bruce had already become, had walked briskly away, and another voice, issuing from the darkness, made the good woman start as if she had been shot.

"Can you take a tired traveller in, Mrs. Medland, for old acquaintance sake?"

If an old acquaintance, it was pretty certain that he was not considered a desirable one, for the woman shook from head to foot, and gave a wild glance round, as if in quest of means of escape. He stepped easily forward, lifting the low-crowned hat from his black curls, and motioned politely to her to lead the way; which she immediately did, cowed even into silence. Her husband, who met them at the door, recognised the unwelcome guest. A deeply muttered oath was his first greeting; his second, the remark, "So *you've* turned up again, have you?"

"Everything does, if you wait long enough, my dear friend; I am charmed to see you both in such excellent health; and, since you make me so welcome, I shall feel obliged by a little supper and a glass of ale as quickly as convenient."

They exchanged looks, and without further parleying, fulfilled his orders; supper was produced, and liquor of various kinds; and while Medland played the host, his wife was getting ready the room where Darch Williams had lodged—fervently wishing that the first sleep her guest enjoyed on that pillow was to be his last.

Wishes, however, being of little avail just then, she quickened her preparations, in order to be present at the colloquy between him and her husband; but remembering the doctor's injunctions, and that it might be very inconvenient to lose old Mrs. Cheveril for want of care, she took a look at her as she went by.

The old woman, now bed-ridden, and only conscious at intervals, was lying with her eyes wide open, and her brow knit in the act of listening. As Mrs. Medland approached, it was with a sensation of superstitious fear that she heard her ask, "Why don't you bring him to me? Have I the time to lose that you throw away?"

"Dear heart, Mrs. Cheveril! Who is it you want to see?"

"That man who came just now—he buried my poor Jack—and I have something to tell him in return. No one ever did old Bess a kindness that she did not repay—no, nor ever served her an ill turn that they weren't sorry for afterwards—do you mind that?" she continued, with sharpness. "Then go and do as I bid you, and bring him in to me."

The strange guest was not a little startled at the message: but after considering a minute or two, he threw down his knife and fork.

"Keep the dish hot," he said, "there is no old woman whose words could spoil my appetite. I remember her perfectly."

Mrs. Medland showed him into the old woman's room. "They are just a pair of them," she muttered to herself, "and if they would only choke each other, one might be thankful. But as there's no

trusting such a man, it's one's duty to be on the watch, and hear what goes on." And she squeezed herself into a closet, at the back of the bed. By whatever mysterious faculty Mrs. Cheveril had detected his presence in the house, she was unable to separate his image from that of Joel, over whose words she had brooded ever since they were spoken. She at once began to talk of her poor lad, and the place where he was buried, and that she should soon be buried herself—but that she should never be released till she had told what she knew.

"And he that laid my boy in the grave is the fit man to hear it, and the message. Did you hear of the Craggs Court affair?"

Tonio nodded, drawing his breath a little harder.

"It were two of them did it; Joe Hughes, and my Jack. Hughes was his cousin, and led him on; they believed old Oram had a deal of money and they meant to get it quietly while he was asleep, but they found him up, busy over some papers, with a secret cupboard open that nobody knew of, and there they found the treasure, you see. And the old man fought hard for it, and so got badly hurt; but they managed so well, no one thought of laying it upon them. And when it came out that they had been his death, my Jack took it so to heart, he carried off his share of the plunder—ah! he had seen it before, and knew it well—and brought it down here, meaning to go and confess all, and give it up to her it belonged to; but his heart failed him, and he was well-nigh beside himself, and he hid the parcel away, wrapped up in oilskin, down yonder, at Lowlevels."

"And can you tell me where, my good lady?" he asked, his eyes glittering with excitement and cupidity.

"Yes, I can tell you that too, and there's many would have been glad enough to know it. The thing got whispered about, and more than one has tried his luck, but to no good. There was one who did murder, or next door to it, they say—I should like to think he had got what he deserved, but he'll have it, never fear."

"Now, hag that thou art," muttered he, "it would cost me little to stop thy tongue, only I have not heard all yet. Good dame," he continued as before, "you have not yet told me where to find it." But a change came over the withered face, and she looked wildly round as if some one had come into the room.

"Who was that?"

He tried in vain to reassure her, and bring her back to her story; the stream of thought had become confused, and she only rambled feebly, and at last closed her eyes. With an execration on her stupidity, he left the room so suddenly that he ran against Mrs. Medland, just emerging from her hiding-place. They looked in each other's eyes, and he saw directly that she knew something more.

"Your good lady is gone to sleep, and I may finish my supper. Is your son come yet with the wine?"

"I hear him talking to his father. You don't mean to be hard upon him, Mr. Tonio, I'm sure."

"Hard? Oh, no. I am soft as down—I only want to rub up his memory a little—and yours, just as sauce to the meat, you know."

"Suppose I know what you want—and that I can help you find it? Look here, that old lady talked once before, and I happened to hear what she said."

"That was clever. It shall be more so if you tell me."

"Come and finish your supper, then, and we'll talk it over," said she, shrewd enough to perceive her advantage, and determined to drive as good a bargain as possible, without offending this dangerous guest. Their return interrupted the conversation of father and son; it drove all the redness out of Bob's face, and his teeth chattered in his head as Tonio made him an ironical bow.

"I give you joy, young man, on having learned to be honest and sober. A character is a grander thing than a fortune."

"Now, don'tee frighten him," said the mother, coaxingly, "and don't you be skeart, Bob. He only means to ask you questions."

"Questions for his good entirely," said the smiling guest, as he took his seat at the table, and resumed his attack on the viands. "First of all, is there anyone here who forgets how certain silver spoons were missing at Highlevels, and an innocent maidservant was sent away on suspicion, while all the while they were in the pocket of my young friend—hein?"

"We paid you for that long ago," growled the old man.

"You paid me for silence. Have I not been silent? But father, mother, son, you be all in the same boat."

"You wouldn't—" began Bob, piteously, but his mother spoke.

"He knows well enough, Bob, that he can make nothing out of us in that way, and he won't try it. Why not be friends, and all work together? He ain't the only one as knows a thing or two."

The guest remarked that the good lady was right, as ladies generally were; and that he, for his part, would never turn against a friend. Bob drew a freer breath on hearing this, and he led him on to talk of his place, and the life he led in it, and the change since Mr. Bruce and the ladies had come down. Partly from nervousness, partly to show himself friendly, young Medland's tongue ran on nearly as glibly as his mother's, telling how hard he had worked, under Mr. Treherne, to put the place in order, and how Mrs. Carroll was so delighted with it, she declared she should study gardening, and live on her own potatoes—and she had made Joel tell her a deal about sowing and planting, because she said one never knew what might happen, and she wanted to be ready. And he had heard Joel and Lucy talking, that Mrs. Carroll had been sent down because her husband expected a smash in London, and did not want her to be in it, but to keep it from her. And Mrs. Bruce had told Ellis that most likely they should lose half their money, and so they must begin

to be economical, instead of letting the Captain spend with both hands, as he liked to do. A noble lady was Mrs. Bruce, the beautifullest he had ever seen; and to look at her, you'd never suppose she could go right up to a foreign brigand, and shoot him with his own gun. Anyhow, she was rather a nervous lady, and Mr. Bruce and Joel went round the house every night, to make sure there was nothing likely to give her a turn.

Had anything been heard or seen lately?

No. Since the trick of the clock came out, there was no chance for anyone—and Medland wouldn't advise its being tried. Something had been found, though; for in clearing away a pile of rubbish, they had come upon a covered well, half filled up, and Mr. Bruce was going to show it to the doctor.

A covered well? How long had it been filled up?

That Bob couldn't say, but they supposed it was done when the repairs were going on. Dear me, was that the clock? He must be off, or Joel would be down upon him—they kept him to hours pretty strict. And Bob got up to depart, evidently anxious to be out of reach of more questions. His father went with him to the gate; his mother was left with their lodger.

"Did you hear what he said about the well?" she whispered.

"Yes. What of it?"

"What will you give me first? You've only said hard things, so far, and you'll get nothing out of me that way."

He nodded, and pulled out some pawnbroker's tickets.

"Do you remember these?"

The report of Bob Medland was so far accurate that Tiny, whose state of health kept them all a little anxious, was quite guiltless herself of any real anxiety, and thoroughly enjoyed what she called retrenchment and economy, which, at present, only meant freedom from housekeeping. It had been a stretch of virtue to give up the house in Greville Gardens, and she felt entitled to all the reward which used in the old story books to be reserved for the good people who retired from the world of London to milk their own cows in Devonshire. That she should ever quite reach that height of excellence, unless cows adopted more reasonable hours, she was inclined to doubt; but in every other respect she was convinced that nature intended her for a hermit—she was so charmed with Joel's herbs and fruits, and Gabriel's trout, and the cream that was Lucy's pride; and only longed for the fuss about business to be over, that Hartley might come down and take them about on the moors. There always had been times of worry, ever since she married, and this only seemed like a worse season than usual; and now they had so reduced their expenses, and Hartley had Mr. Herbert to advise him, she took it for granted that all would soon come right.

Hartley Carroll's present danger had been brought on by some

rash speculations into which Sir Jesse Strahan had led him, and his utmost exertions, with Gabriel's help, had only partially secured him from what had nearly been utter ruin. With the energy of a nature that, habitually easy and careless, could be roused on occasion to tremendous efforts, Hartley was doing all that man could do to prepare for the coming storm—looking into everything himself, and stimulating those under him by example and appeals to their loyalty, till they hardly believed they were in the same place. He wrote every day to his wife, but always in his gay careless style, which disguised what he was really suffering.

As may easily be supposed, the acquaintance with Dr. Nelson led to many a discussion over the mystery of his wife's last illness, a subject in which another person took the keenest interest. This was Philip Forrest, who, having suddenly broken down over his work, had come to Level Bridge to help the Canon, and recruit himself at the same time with the pure moorland air. He had a room at a farm-house; but he could not resist the attraction of Gabriel's society, and was often in and out, taking a share in all the consultations, and bent on discovering by whom, and in what manner, the cruel wrong had been inflicted which had scathed the happiness of poor Frank.

It appeared that the clock, with some other articles, was purchased by Dr. Nelson with the house, and he had been much startled by Martin's discovery of the passage behind. Of course, this had since been carefully examined, but it was found so choked with stones and rubbish, that it would require the assistance of workmen to make it clear. On discovering the well, it struck Gabriel that they might perhaps find there the clue to the mystery. His belief was, that the passage in the house communicated with the well, and had been formerly used either as a drain, or as a means of conveying the water, and he began to calculate the time it would take to clear it out; which, when Joel overheard, he shook his head with his low warning whistle. If he would only wait till the Ironhand came down, they would begin upon it themselves; for that matter, he had a good mind to begin to-morrow. And so he would have done, but for a downpour of rain, to which even his energy was fain to yield, and which lasted for a couple of days. It was not without its utility, for the cover having been removed from the well, the water rushed through the earth and loosened the stones, and when he was able to commence operations, he was not long in clearing the mouth of the well to the depth of a couple of feet. The next discovery was that there was a ledge in the masonry, on which some planks had been laid across, supporting the earth and rubbish, so as to give it the appearance of being filled from the bottom; a discovery promising to lighten his labours, but still more to present the key to the sibyl's oracle, which had taken as great a hold of his fancy as of Mrs. Medland's.

"I wonder what little Miss would say to such a find as this," he observed to his satellite Bob, as he pulled off his jacket in the

morning sun, and poised his pickaxe in his powerful hands, before beginning to work.

Bob started at the remark. "Do you think you'll find gold?" he said, in a tone of awe.

"Gold! Bless your innocence, you're no wiser about gold-finding than Missy herself. Did you really think we dug up a nugget among the apple trees?"

"Didn't you, then? Why, Mrs. Bilson said you did."

"Then don't you be in a hurry to believe her. The Ironhand had one to his watch-chain, and he passed it on to me, and we humoured the poor little maid, seeing she was not quite like other people. A nice object you were that day, I remember."

"I wish you were all in the well—I wish I had never seen any of you—I wish I was dead!" and Bob burst out crying.

"So!" remarked Joel, "someone has been treating you, I see. What did they want out of you?"

"Are you going to turn me off, Mr. Treherne? You said you would the next time I drank."

"Do you want to go?"

"I'd give the world to be a hundred miles off."

Joel laid down his pickaxe, took his assistant by the shoulder, and put him into the tool-house, with his back to the wall.

"Now then, tell the truth, or I'll shake it out of you. What is it?"

"Oh, don't speak so sharp to me, Mr. Treherne. It's my old sin finding me out, that's what it is, sir. I wish Mr. Martin was here."

"Joel! Joel! A telegram! You're wanted this minute!" cried Lucy's voice.

Joel stood one second irresolute; then whistled for Settler, and ordered him to watch. The dog seemed quite to understand, and lay down, eyeing Medland significantly.

"You just stay there till I come back," was Joel's parting admonition; and he strode back to the house just as Gabriel was coming to look for him. The whole household was gathered together in the hall, and the yellow paper in Mr. Bruce's hand was as follows:—

"*Hartley Carroll to Gabriel Bruce.*

"The Ironhand in trouble. Your evidence and Joel's wanted directly."

"Do you see what that means, Joel?"

"Yes, sir; it must all come out now."

"Then run off to Level Bridge, and bring back a trap."

Joel departed on his errand. Later arrived Philip Forrest, shouldering a carpet-bag, with a boy carrying his portmanteau.

"I've come to say, Mrs. Bruce, I want to change my lodging. Can you take me in?"

She was only too thankful, though she tried to conceal the thankfulness from her husband. Bruce's welcome was no less hearty. His

preparations and Joel's did not take very long, and the latter had time to let out Settler's captive, and take him aside for a few serious words.

"Now then," he said, "look here. You talk of your sin finding you out, when it seems you just go and put yourself in its way. You've got a chance now, and if you use it, you'll make friends for life, and start afresh for a course like an honest fellow. Mr. Bruce and I are obliged to go to town, leaving our wives behind. Will you stick to them, like a man? Will you pitch all treats, and tips, and threats back into the teeth of anyone who gives them, and do your duty by the women, God helping you? Don't think twice about it, but if you will, give me your hand."

"I will, Mr. Treherne—I will indeed. God bless you for speaking to me like that. It puts new heart into a fellow."

"High time it did. Mr. Forrest is in the house, and the doctor will have his eye upon it, and they will report how you keep your word. There, get on with your gardening like a man."

He went into the kitchen, told the state of the case to Mrs. Ellis and his wife, and exhorted them to extra watchfulness and courage; then begged leave to speak to his mistress. She admitted him directly, and in Gabriel's presence he told her plainly that he did not at all like leaving the house unprotected, and so he had made bold to ask Mr. Forrest to garrison it in their absence. Edith was startled—she could not deny it—but she recovered herself directly she saw the distress in Gabriel's face. Joel had done quite right. And so long as nothing was said to frighten Mrs. Carroll, Edith promised them courage should not be wanting to keep the Castle Dangerous while its lord was away.

CHAPTER XXXV.

DARCH MAKES A DEPOSITION.

If Mr. Plummer's proposal to undertake Martin's defence took his principal, Sir Jesse, by surprise, it was only for the first moment. His brow smoothed its wrinkles into bland serenity, as he expressed his satisfaction in the arrangement; but Mr. Plummer saw that whatever he had intended before, his doom was sealed.

"I will read the deposition of the man Williams aloud, if you please, and take a copy of it. Is it in your handwriting, Sir Jesse?"

"It is; he was too ill to write."

"But his senses must be clear, to dictate all this?"

"He had recovered consciousness. He is now asleep."

"There is no fear of his eluding justice, I presume?"

"He is watched by a nurse: and he could not leave the house without assistance."

The lawyer glanced at the paper, gave Martin a warning sign, and read aloud as follows:

"When did I first see the Ironhand? Why, at the store kept by Mr. Bruce, on the way to the Wambiloa diggings; but I had heard of him before as a sharp hand, and I wanted to buy him over. He had been in the mounted police, and knew more than was good for him. I wanted a mate of his sort, and I watched for a chance of 'listing him, and got it at last."

"I should like to know where," remarked Martin.

"My dear sir, your curiosity is natural, but there is more of interest to come, if you will let me proceed."

"I had heard talk among the diggers of two fellows who had been missing ever since they went off into the bush, and were supposed to have some valuable plunder about them—which they had brought from England. More than one had tried to strike their trail, on the chance of finding the prize, and a poor crazy chap whom we picked up, half starving, was for ever starting off to look for it, and coming back dead beat, to be laughed at for his pains. Martin and I got talking about it, and he said it would be worth while to try, and we agreed, at last, to go shares in whatever we found. It came to nothing that time, and it was some months later when I saw him again, in another part of the country. He told me the captain had found the treasure, and carried it always about him, and as they were going home at once he could do nothing about getting hold of it, but if I would run the risk, he would keep a look out, and give me warning—and we were to share and share alike when all was done. He's a close fist at a bargain, but he kept his word, for I had a hint from him several times, always worth taking."

"I should like to give him another," said Martin. "Does anyone in the room believe this fellow?"

"Do not ask questions, my friend," said Sir Jesse. "All we have to do is to get at the truth."

"This is digging for gold among the apple trees with a vengeance," muttered the hunter; but he resolved to listen to the end.

The reading was resumed, but we will only give its purport. This theory of Martin's co-operation explained all the proceedings which have been related already. He had first given Wily Wilkins notice of the ship they sailed in—then, when Mr. Bruce changed his mind and his route, and the pursuer followed them to Paris, he and Martin had a word together in the train, and it was by the hunter's assistance that Darch gave Joel the slip. At the hotel, accident alone prevented his entering the captain's room at night, to try the effect of a little chloroform; then he heard from the Ironhand that he and Joel were going into the country, and the job had better be done in their absence. One of his mates tried it on in the train, but failed. Then Martin went away again, and the fire at the school was got up, and nearly answered, but luck was against them again, and they began to think it a bad job. However, he went down to consult the Ironhand, and heard from him about Mrs.

Salisbury's diamonds, and they came to an agreement that if Darch could get hold of them, and replace them in their setting with false stones, Martin should restore the box, and touch the reward. This trick had been cleverly managed, and Darch was hard at work over his imitations, when the Ironhand came down upon him, and claimed more than his share. They had high words, and a blow was given him—perhaps harder than was meant, but he hoped to repay it some day.

So ingeniously was all this put together, that to those who were not in the secret, the case looked singularly ugly. Martin sat with his arms folded, and his eyes looking steadily before him; "very dangerously quiet," as Burns thought to himself. Perhaps at the moment, he was less dangerous than he looked, for his thoughts had flown back to old days with Gabriel Bruce, the first glow of love his heart had felt for this friend, so unlike anyone he had known before —the perfect trust between them, proved in so many actions—the consciousness that life would be a blank without Gabriel's face, which had induced him to leave freedom and the woods for the stranger world of England; and the new, brighter, nobler visions which had risen upon him there.

The superintendent's voice was the first to break the silence. "The jewel-box is here, I suppose. Let us have a look at it."

The canvas package was placed on the table. It had already been opened, Sir Jesse explained, but the contents had been left undisturbed. The general appearance of the ornaments confirmed the statement of Darch Williams, most of the stones having been loosened from their setting and were lying by themselves, wrapped up in pieces of wash-leather. On counting them over, it was found that several were missing. The superintendent nodded his head.

"How many diamonds may you have about you?" he asked Martin, turning round upon him suddenly.

The hunter was silent.

"Come, my friend," said Sir Jesse, "you will do yourself no good by evasion. Sooner or later, it must all come out. Your bush cleverness will hardly avail you here."

Martin saw that Mr. Plummer, though busily writing, was keenly listening for his answer, and that Burns had come a step nearer. He deliberately unfastened his shirt-collar, and took from his neck a small steel purse, at the end of a chain of the same metal.

"Be so good, all of you, as to bear witness that I show these of my own free will," he said; "there are three diamonds here, and very splendid ones they are. Mr. Bruce and Joel have the rest. This was the treasure we found; and we agreed to take care of it amongst us, until we could restore it to its owner."

All Sir Jesse's powers of dissimulation could not conceal the excitement he felt at the sight of these stones. His hand shook as he took them up; his breath came quick and short. However, he

allowed the superintendent to examine and compare these gems with the others. They seemed exactly to fit the setting of part of the necklace.

"You say you brought these from Australia, do you?"

"Yes, and I appeal to the testimony of Mr. Bruce, my master, and Joel Treherne, my fellow-servant. If you please, I will tell you the whole story, and Mr. Plummer will kindly write it down."

"Stop," said Sir Jesse, hurriedly, "with the superintendent's leave, I submit that this is too serious a matter to be done in a hurry. For the young man's own sake, we should wait for Mr. Bruce's coming. To-morrow we will telegraph for him: and meanwhile, I will be answerable for the appearance of the Ironhand, as well as of Darch Williams. A bedroom will be at your service, Mr. Martin, and Burns will attend you. I know you will not allow me to be compromised, and you shall have every indulgence you may require. These valuables must be sealed up for the night, and I am afraid your prize must be detained among them, until their story is more clearly explained."

He brought out wax as he spoke, and rapidly sealed up the package with his own large seal, then made the superintendent and Martin each add one of theirs. At the sight of that used by the latter, he could not help uttering an exclamation of surprise.

"Who gave you that?"

But at this moment, a message was delivered to Sir Jesse. Mr. Carroll had called on pressing business.

When the Ironhand was arrested, and Bill Close started homewards to report what he had seen, his first idea was to find Mr. Forrest; but hearing that he might not be in for some hours, he went off to Mr. Carroll's house of business, where he had already been several times on messages. Luckily, Hartley was there, and though really very busy, his good nature made him at once listen carelessly to Bill's story. When it came, however, to the description of the house to which the Ironhand had been taken, his face became grave and attentive. Calling for a hansom, and taking the boy with him, he drove to the Mission-house, to learn where David was gone. With some difficulty, they traced him at last to old Martin's; and Hartley, for the first time in his life, found himself ascending the staircase of a model lodging-house, wondering, as he did so, how Tiny would like that sort of thing, should they all go to smash. A woman with a tray in her hands was crossing the passage, and stopped short at sight of him.

"Mr. Carroll—you here, sir? Is anything the matter?"

"Stop a minute—I ought to know your face—you are Grace Pyne, are you not? That is all right, for you may be able to help us. I am anxious about the Ironhand—the police have taken him to Sir Jesse Strahan's."

She uttered a faint cry, begged him to wait, and hurried in with her tray. David Forrest came out.

"Carroll, what is all this?"

"That you must help me find out. Bill Close, your favourite pupil, was at some mischief or other in Paradise Row, and saw a crowd round one of the doors, as there had been one row, and might be another. He saw Martin come out with the doctor, and get into his brougham, while a doubtful-looking man mounted the box by the driver—evidently a policeman in plain clothes. He says the Ironhand made him a sign—one of a series he seems to have taught him—meaning that he was to take notice where he went, and the youngster tracked him to Strahan's house in —— Square. Now, for Strahan to have been mixed up in it at all, there must have been some ugly reason, and I am more anxious than I can quite account for. My own belief is that the carriage was Strahan's own, and he was the doctor: which makes the matter worse."

"You make me anxious too. Come in; my old friend here may perhaps give us some advice."

He led Mr. Carroll into the room, where old Erasmus Martin, looking very feeble, was sitting as usual in his easy-chair. A few words were enough to light up his sunken eyes with a keen intelligence that charmed Hartley directly.

"Grace, my girl!" said the old man.

She came forward, looking very pale, but calm and resolute.

"Have you heard anything of this?"

"No, Mr. Martin: but I see what has happened. All must come to light now, only don't let the brave young gentleman suffer for keeping his promise to me. He promised, if he could see poor Darch, that he would try and save him, and I know he has tried.

"He has evidently been followed, and taken up as an accomplice. Don't cry, my woman—we'll see if we can't save them both. At any rate, the son of my dearest friend shall not suffer as his father did, if an old man's voice can save him. Yes, gentlemen—so it is; if I had not been afraid of offending and driving him away, I should have spoken sooner. That young man, Martin, is my godson—I was his father's confidential clerk, and served him faithfully, and was liberally repaid. That I live as you see me here is owing to him. He called his boy after me, and when he fled the country to bury himself in the wilderness, he seems to have taken my name. It was that which made me think of it at first; but when the dear lad came to see me, and understood that lock which Mr. Desmond invented, and no one else could put in order—I knew who he must be. The things he has told me—his age, his father's habits—the year he died—all agree—there is no doubt in my own mind, that he is the son of Desmond Moreton; and I may hope now to see him owned. But you will have to be careful, gentlemen; if he takes the alarm, he will escape you all. He has been impressed with the fact that he can never hold up his head among you as your equal, and he will never bear to be put to shame. Don't let him think that, or he is lost. Tell him

only to be patient; there is much to be told and explained, which has never been made public yet, but for which I believe God's mercy has kept me alive, when I have often longed to be at rest."

"Well, Carroll, is there anything I can do to serve you?" asked Sir Jesse, when, after sufficient delay to make Hartley very impatient, he entered the dining-room, into which the guest had been shown. "I was rather anxious about you by the look of affairs. There were ugly stories afloat this morning."

"There is always something ugly if you look out for it," said Hartley, "but the ugliest thing I know at this minute is the chance of my dinner being spoiled. Just let the Ironhand know I'm waiting for him, will you?"

"The Ironhand? You have heard what has taken place?"

"I heard that you had brought him here in your carriage, so I am come to fetch him away in my own hackney coach. Seriously; if, in his ignorance of London, he has got into a scrape, I want to see him well out of it. What is the matter?"

"Sit down, and you shall hear. I hope it is ignorance, but it looks like something else. You remember our talking about him at your table, and Burlington Ford's remarks?"

"Quite well, and like many of Burlington's oracular sentences, I thought them entirely unfounded. According to his theory, we are all fools or rogues."

"However that may be, my suspicions once aroused, I could not help observing the fellow more narrowly, and there was something so strange about that Italian business, after what had gone before, that I had him watched, and to-day's work is the result."

He described the condition in which the jewels had been discovered, confirming the statement of Darch Williams, which he gave Hartley to read; and observed that three of the lost gems had just been found on Martin's own person. Hartley whistled on hearing this. Appealed to Bruce, had he? That could soon be settled, as he would telegraph to him the first thing in the morning.

"Meanwhile, Strahan, if I were you, I would be in no hurry to form my judgment. Supposing this precious confession to be true, they are a pair of the biggest rascals unhung, and I should be sorry to have that said of anyone belonging to me."

"That is no fault of mine. If Mr. Bruce is annoyed, I cannot help it."

"Bruce, my dear fellow? It is of you and Mrs. Salisbury I am thinking. He is her grandson—your nephew—the only son of Desmond Moreton."

"How—how dare you, Carroll?" began Sir Jesse, his face one blaze of passion at what he took for mockery. But Hartley coolly cut him short.

"It is no question of daring, but of identity. There is an old clerk of Moreton's in the city, who can prove it to your thorough satisfaction."

"But Moreton himself is not living?" The words came out with difficulty, the flash of anger having changed to a ghastly paleness.

"No, he died some years ago, and Erasmus, who was so named after the old clerk, was left to his own devices, not knowing to this day to what family he belongs, but having been told by his father that he could never be a gentleman. What that meant, perhaps you know better than I do."

Sir Jesse turned to the sideboard, and poured out some wine with such tremulous haste that Hartley almost expected to see him drop the glass. It seemed to answer his purpose, for he made a slight apology, observing that he had been a little upset before, and this had almost overcome him. If this story were true—what a miserable position the young man would be in—what a shock awaited his excellent grandmother! The loss of the diamonds themselves would be nothing to the agony of thinking that he had been mixed up in the affair; it was enough to kill her at once.

"For that matter," said Hartley, "I should as soon think of suspecting Alice Kerr, who painted them. Where is he? I should like him to know that there is some one in the house who prefers taking his word to that of a rogue."

"You shall see him if he will be seen," said Sir Jesse, biting his lip as he withdrew. Presently he returned, shaking his head.

"If pride and wilfulness are proofs of his being Desmond's son, he has quite enough to satisfy anybody. Nothing will induce him to face you, until he is cleared by the evidence of Bruce and Joel. I have promised he shall do as he pleases, and you had better meet Bruce here to-morrow. There is no doubt of his coming."

"He holds his servant in higher estimation than you hold your nephew. A hint that he is in trouble will be quite enough."

"You speak irritably, Carroll, and I can allow for that, considering how you are worried. You would despise advice from me now, so I do not give it. But look that over at your leisure," added Sir Jesse, kindly, putting some papers into his hand, and taking leave with the cordiality of former intercourse.

"He has sunk every farthing of his own money, and much of Bruce's into the bargain," thought Sir Jesse, when alone, "but this will set his shallow brain working, and he'll come back, I know. I have good reason for strengthening all my defences. Of course this story is true—the fellow has Desmond's own seal that I gave him myself, just like my own." He took one out of a drawer and eyed it closely. "Yes, here is the Tiberius head—I remember the place where I bought them both, and the day as if it were yesterday—what weather we had for Capri, to be sure! Strange to think how things come round. What has Plummer been about, that I was not told all this before?"

He rang the bell, and requested that Mr. Plummer would come and speak to him for a moment; thanked him, on his entrance, for the skilful manner in which he had prevented any imputation of unfair-

ness from resting on the proceedings, and requested he would return early the next day, to resume the charge of young Martin's interests—interests nearer to his own than were generally supposed. The wary lawyer bowed, accepted all the civility, even to the glass of wine which was pressed upon him before his departure, and took his leave, wondering from what quarter the storm would blow.

His uncertainty was soon removed. On his way home he was arrested for an old debt, which his kind patron had bought up some time before.

Declining all offers of refreshment, and weary in mind and body, the hunter had flung himself on the bed, and fallen fast asleep. Burns, seated in an arm-chair, had with difficulty refrained from following his example; and was watching him enviously, when Sir Jesse entered, and told him he might get some rest in another room; he would relieve him of his charge for an hour. Martin's dreams were presently disturbed by a hand on his shoulder; he found his host bending over him with a look of deep interest, quite free from the taunting superiority of the previous evening. Without expressing any surprise, but certain that something was coming for which he was not prepared, Erasmus rose immediately, and assumed an attitude of attention. For aught he knew, they might want to take him before a magistrate, and he only wished he understood more about English law, that he might be sure of his own rights, and defend them. He was soon undeceived; Sir Jesse only wished to be looked upon as his friend, by right of the connection between them, just discovered. No one but himself, he felt, ought to be the one to acknowledge Desmond Moreton's son; for no one knew, as he did, why that acknowledgment was necessary. He had time to tell the tale, to say all that he had planned, for even when all the evidence was before him, it seemed as if the hunter could hardly believe, or at any rate realise, what he heard. Gradually, as his own recollection confirmed the proofs, by showing that they offered the only clue to conduct of his father's which had been the enigma of his life, he ceased to contend or to question, but sat with his arms resting on his knees, and his eyes fixed on the ground, struggling against the strange new emotion that was rising to overwhelm his soul.

His father's home—his father's mother—with what a yearning tenderness he thought of them at that moment can only be imagined by remembering that he had till then believed himself alone in the world, and knew kindred only by seeing what it could be to others. The atmosphere of the room, the restraint of the four walls, became almost oppressive; he longed to rush out into the open air, and give vent to this choking excitement, which made him tremble like a woman, and dimmed his eyes with moisture—he could not tell why. Sir Jesse's voice sounded in his ears without conveying meaning to his brain, until he suddenly became aware that he was giving him to

understand how great the shock of the discovery would be to Mrs. Salisbury—how terribly it would recall the sad story of her son's disappearance—a story they had all tried to make her forget. Forget? He had himself forgotten that between him and an honoured name lay the gulf of which his father had spoken—at any rate, now he must, and would, learn what that was, and this man should tell him, if he had to drag it from him by force. He stood erect before Sir Jesse, and the latter almost recoiled from the fierceness of the glowing eye and pointed finger.

"Sir, you have not told me all this, to mock me with words that mean nothing. If you are my uncle, you must know that any disgrace of mine must be shared by my relations. Tell me in plain words, as you are a gentleman, what is the charge against my father? What was it he did? Was it not a fancy of his brain—brought on by over-work, that he was—what he called himself—what no one else had better call him when I am by?"

"This is not the tone in which such questions should be asked, Erasmus. But I pity you too much to be offended. Your father's brain may have suffered later, but he knew what he was doing, when he ruined himself by speculations, and then defrauded a lady to whom he was trustee, in the attempt to recover his losses. The old friendship between him and her family prevented any public exposure, but the story got abroad, and he could never have held up his head in society again. The lady herself has been dead some time, but the consequences were felt by her son. No, I have not mentioned him."

"Not mentioned what? I will hear every word! What do you think a man is made of?"

"You are hasty, sir, but I forgive it. I can feel for you. It is right you should know the truth—that the lady's maiden name was Wyatt—and she was the mother of Gabriel Bruce."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

SIR JESSE MAKES A MISTAKE.

Sir Jesse went back to his study, and sent for the nurse, to whose care Darch Williams had been entrusted on being brought to the house. She speedily appeared, in all the demure respectability of a black dress, and white cap and apron; and having at his sign closed the door behind her, stood curtseying to receive his orders.

"How is your patient, nurse?"

"His cough is easier, Sir Jesse, since he took the draught you sent him; but he is very restless and irritable himself—won't keep still a minute."

"I wonder at that; the medicine ought to have made him sleep. A very little of it is enough for me."

"It's the pain he's in, perhaps, Sir Jesse. May be, a little more of it might quiet him—people are so different about these things."

"You shall have some more, if you think so; but be careful, for it is a very strong preparation. Is he impatient of restraint?"

"Dreadful, Sir Jesse. I had to promise he should go away the first thing to-morrow—just to please him."

"It must be very early then, Mrs. Bilson, for I shall not be able to protect him much longer. Could he be moved, do you think?"

"Dear heart, yes, sir—why, he is walking up and down his room at this minute, though he turns faint again after a few turns, and has to lie down. If he could only get a little sleep, he might be stronger to go."

"He shall have another draught, and then he can try. I am not unmindful of your services, Mrs. Bilson, or of the risk you run in being mixed up with this unfortunate man, and I wish to protect you both. Do not interrupt me, if you please, for time is precious. The man's case demands surgical care, you understand; and here is a letter to the —— Hospital, and a sum in this purse to pay expenses. As soon as it is light, get him out of the house. Slade will be sitting up, to attend upon you, and will have a cab ready. Should you be questioned anywhere, or at any time, you will remember that I gave you the letter, and you can show it."

"I understand, Sir Jesse, perfectly."

"For your personal reward I have also made arrangements. Your brother, the emigration agent, is well known to me. Through him I shall always keep an eye upon you, wherever you go. As soon as I hear you and Williams are married and out of the country, I shall settle an annuity of fifty pounds upon you, which will be stopped directly either of you return. There is a vessel announced to start to-morrow evening. Your brother can secure your berths, and I leave the rest to you and him."

"You are very good, Sir Jesse," said the woman, trembling, but not daring to say more.

He took her acquiescence as a matter of course, and turned to unlock a cabinet, in which stood several small bottles with glass stoppers. Among these he was selecting the one required, when he thought he heard a sound, as if one of his designs was being carried out, and in the agitation of listening—for he was agitated in spite of himself—he forgot his usual caution, thrust the bottle into Bilson's hands without looking at it, and hurried her out of the room. Then he strode to a window in the neighbouring apartment, raised it cautiously, and listened again. Satisfied with the result, he sat down to write; and about an hour later, Slade, who had been engaged in disposing of Mr. Plummer, returned to report progress and take further instructions. When these had been given, Sir Jesse rang for

his valet, Simmons, ordered the household to bed, and dismissed him for the night, as he had letters and accounts to finish, which would keep him up late. He might, indeed, have occasion to go out very early, but Slade would be in attendance, and he required no one else to sit up.

His orders were always meant to be obeyed to the letter, and even the privileged Simmons knew better than to disregard such a hint. By twelve o'clock the house was as still as if it had been empty.

Having ascertained that such was the case, Sir Jesse's next object was to examine the packet he had so carefully sealed, and which he as carefully re-opened, melting some of the wax with dexterous skill, so that he might replace the impressions when necessary. He had scarcely spread the contents before him, when he became aware of being either very tired or very faint, and that his sight was growing dizzy, a sensation to which he was not altogether a stranger, though it was some time since it last occurred. In point of fact, the day had been one of excessive fatigue and excitement, and he had scarcely tasted a morsel of food, so that it was no wonder he should feel exhausted. As his physician had warned him a couple of years before, nature would rebel if overtaxed, and he felt he had tried her a little too far. His first impulse was to open the door and call his trusted spy, now waiting in the hall; but he remembered the diamonds, and thought he would take a cordial first, which would give him strength to put them out of sight before summoning assistance. He did not stop to close the door again, for his giddiness was almost blinding. By a desperate effort he opened the cabinet, and felt for some ginger brandy which he always kept there in case of need. Too faint to do more, he drew out the stopper, put the bottle to his mouth, and, from the trembling of his hand, swallowed a larger portion than he intended. In an instant he became aware of the terrible mistake he had made. It was the powerful narcotic he had meant for Darch Williams.

The shock of the discovery for a moment roused his sinking energies; that he must immediately do something, he felt with an exquisite agony of terror such as he had never known in his whole life. If he had not been so mad as to frighten Erasmus away, he and Burns would have been close at hand. Perhaps, after all, they were not gone, and if they saved him he would make all right, and reward them handsomely; he would make friends with the young fellow and his grandmother, and atone for all bygones, if only—ah! that deadly sickness of heart that brought the cold dew all over his face. He had a vague consciousness that it might be his salvation if only proper remedies could be supplied in time—and he made one more hopeless struggle, but could only reach his easy-chair.

Once seated, the faintness seemed to diminish; and the relief was so great that he involuntarily yielded to the dangerous comfort. He would sit still for two minutes, and then ring up the servants, and send for his doctor. And, as may be imagined, he gradually sub-

sided into a doze, which passed into the heavy sleep from which no power of his own could arouse him.

In the meanwhile, his plans were being diligently worked out. Bilson had faithfully communicated to Darch the terms on which alone he could escape, and he had acquiesced with the half-sullen doggedness of one who had no choice. In flattering this woman's vanity for his own ends, he had in reality put himself so much in her power, that in his state of weakness and suffering he was fain to follow her humour, and keep her attached to his fortunes, until he saw a fair prospect of leaving her behind. He gnashed his teeth as he thought how little he had won by all his exertions; and secretly promised himself that when once safely out of reach of the law, he would see if he could not threaten his wealthy patron into making better terms.

"What have you got there?" he asked fretfully, as Bilson produced the bottle.

"The stuff for your cough. We must mind what we are about with it, as it is very strong, he says."

"Let me smell it." He took out the stopper, and very coolly swallowed a draught. "He was selling you—just like him. He hoped to kill me off with this; it is first-rate ginger brandy. Pack it up out of my sight; we shall be glad of it sooner or later."

Partly owing to the liquor, and partly to exhaustion, he fell asleep during Bilson's preparations for their departure; and when at last it was time to rouse him, his cough had again become so troublesome that she suggested it might be possible to get the opiate after all. She would just go quietly to the study door and see.

She went, and Darch waited, stifling his cough as well as he could. She soon returned, in breathless haste.

"Come and look at him—he is fast asleep; but it don't look all right to me."

He followed her into the study, where the man he had served and feared was reclining in his arm-chair, plunged in that deadly sleep.

"Seems as if he had taken something. There's a strong smell about: what is it?"

A hasty glance round the room soon showed the bottle, whose stopper had not been replaced. The woman's impulse was to run to the arm-chair and rouse the sleeper at all hazards; but Darch had seen something else which turned the scale as it trembled on the balance.

"Touch him if you dare!" he said, in a fierce whisper. "Do you think he'd spare you if you stood in his way? Let him bide, it is no affair of ours; help me to make sure of this. Quick, now, or that fellow below will hear!"

He had already regained the mastery, and she obeyed him—partly in dread of his anger, partly in selfish fear for herself, partly from cupidity: and the fatal gems were secured from observation in her

shawl. Keeping her eyes turned away from the sleeping man, she was about to put up the opiate, but Darch stopped her hand.

"That must stay as it is, to show how it happened. It is his own doing, not ours."

She shuddered, but made no reply. They left the room in silence: and all had been so carefully arranged for their escape, that they accomplished it in safety, leaving the miserable lord of the mansion face to face with his terrible doom.

The arrest of Martin and Darch had removed all Grace Pyne's fear of being recognized; should her evidence be required, she was ready to give it; and her anxiety for news brought her early to her old friend's room, knowing as she did how much the old man relied on her services. About ten o'clock they were surprised by a visit from Burns the spy, bringing a letter from Mr. Plummer, explanatory of his arrest, and asking for immediate relief, for Martin's sake. The old man's eyes kindled as he read, and he beckoned to Grace to give him his writing materials.

"I saved up money, year after year, with small hope of doing him any good by it; it is all at his service, principal and interest. Have you seen him to-day, Burns?"

"Well, yes; but I've lost sight of him now. I left him at the —— Hospital, but he was gone when I got back."

"How was that? What took Martin there? Sit down, will you, and tell me all about it. I feared you would scare him away among you. If only he had come to me!"

"And so I think he meant to do, according to my advice. Well, thank you, I will sit down a bit, for I have been on my legs nearly all night. You see, when I found that Mr. Plummer was to be got out of the way for interfering, it began to look serious; I might be shunted next myself, and the young gentleman would be left without anyone to advise him."

"Was he told the truth?"

"That I can't say; but Sir Jesse came into the room when all was quiet, sent me to lie down, and talked to him for some time. By-and-by comes the young man to me, and wakes me out of my sleep, looking like some one who has had a mortal blow. 'Burns,' says he, quiet enough, 'I'm going out of this house directly; I can't stay another hour.'

"'Sir,' I said, 'if I may make so bold, what did he tell you?'

"'What the whole world will soon know,' he says, 'that my dead father robbed my dearest friend; and I cannot stay to hear that friend told of it, and to see my own flesh and blood ashamed of me.' I guessed at once why that had been put into his head, and I put two and two together, and I said, 'Well, sir, it seems to me, as matters stand, that the sooner you are out of the house the better. Surely,' I said, 'you have other friends to stand by you? I wouldn't take all for granted that you hear from a certain quarter, that may have his own

ends to answer in getting you out of the way.' 'All right,' he says, in his short way, 'only show me how to get out, or I must try the window.' 'You'll not do that, sir,' I said, 'because I must go with you, and that won't suit me. I promised to keep an eye upon you, but I had no orders to hinder your going where you pleased." He gave me a strange kind of look, almost like a hunted wild thing, but he said no more, and I took him out of the house easy enough, for it was just what the gentleman wanted. I persuaded him, as I thought, to come and see you before he did anything rash, and I was bringing him the shortest way, thinking you'd be able to take him in for the night, when we were pulled up by finding ourselves in a crowd, pouring out of the Triumph Theatre. Have you seen the morning paper? There is an account of it all there. Women were shrieking and screaming, people fighting to get out; the police were trying to keep order, and assure them there was no danger but what they made themselves. The fact was, there had been an accident from the fall of some woodwork belonging to the stage, and the people thought the gallery was coming down, and some screamed out 'Fire!' and then you know how soon there is a rush. Mr. Martin looks round at me, and says, 'We must lend a hand, mate,' and I can't tell you how pleased I was when he called me that; I'd have gone after him into a furnace then. We did what we could in getting some of the women safely out, and I may say we fought for our lives in doing it; and I am afraid the young gentleman was hurt once, for he was driven up against some iron rails, and I heard him groan, in spite of all the uproar. However, there was no time to think about ourselves, and at last the crowd grew less, and we thought we'd go inside and see if help was wanted there. Sure enough, while people were fancying themselves half murdered outside, poor creatures in pain couldn't get attended to, and a doctor who had come from the hospital was nearly beside himself, singing out for helpers that wouldn't or couldn't come. A fine young woman, one of the actresses, was so badly hurt, he said she must be carried to the hospital directly; and we managed it among us. Something was said about letting her friends know—she was conscious enough to think of them, and gave her mother's address, and I was sent off to tell her—as bitter-tongued an Irish scold as ever I saw—small thanks did I get for going from Madame Salviati, as she called herself."

"Oh!" cried Grace. "Was it poor Caterina who was hurt?"

"Aye, that was the name the mother said; and that it was the second daughter that had been carried to that hospital—just as if the hospital wanted them for dissection. I didn't stay long parleying there, but when I got back I found I had better not have gone. The doctor had given orders not to let me in; and Mr. Martin, I was told, was gone."

"Where could he go at that time of night?"

"I could not tell. This morning I went off after Mr. Plummer, and from him came to you, Mr. Martin; and it is my advice that you lose no time, for if that young gentleman is bent on giving us the slip, he'll be out of reach while we are thinking about it."

"God forbid!" said the old man. "He is over all; and I will not believe the boy has been shown to us like this to be lost again. Here are your instructions; go to Mr. Herbert's office, and see him yourself. I'll stand all your expenses, and whatever is due into the bargain. What is it, Grace, my dear? Don't keep him when time is precious."

"I want to know about the other unhappy man. Where is he, do you know, sir?"

"Darch Williams? He is at Sir Jesse Strahan's, and has made a declaration to prove that young Martin has been his chum in thieving all along, and only quarrelled with him about their shares."

She lifted her hands for a moment with a heavy sigh; then hastily resumed her bonnet and cloak. "I must go and enquire about poor Caterina, Mr. Martin; I will come again to you by-and-by."

"Whisht, darling, whisht!" said the feeble voice, while the dim eyes rested wistfully on a pale, sorrowful face bent over her, "it's not much pain I'm in, not very much; and it don't matter now the season's just over. They meant to put on a new piece, and I'll not be wanted."

"Oh, sister, sister!" sobbed poor Honor: who being now sufficiently convalescent to move about and help a little, had been permitted to visit her sister's ward, the rather that small hope was given of Caterina's recovery. "Sure it's wanted you'll be every day of my life, now they say I am to live when I'd rather not!"

"That's good hearing, dear, for what would the mother do alone? And there's another who'll be kind to you, darling, kind as a brother for Caterina's sake, I know, when he can—and that's Tonio. I can't make out why he made no money this time, and had to borrow mine; but I know he'll pay it all back, and you'll get into the country, darling, and grow strong."

"Oh, Caterina, don't!" said Honor, hiding her face in her hands, as the loving sentences came out in jerks with the labouring breath.

"What is it, jewel? Tell me."

"If I do, you'll hate me—you'll never forgive me; and yet I couldn't help it, for I thought I was dying."

Her nurse, who came up to moisten Caterina's parched lips, reminded Honor that if she could not be quiet, the doctor would not allow her to remain. The girl looked up, half angrily; but recollected herself directly afterwards.

"I'll do anything you like, only don't send me away from her! I'll be quiet, and keep my shame to myself."

But the wistful eyes were still unsatisfied. "Is it afraid of me

you are, darling?" pleaded the faltering voice; "do you think we'd quarrel just when we're saying good-bye?"

"Can you love your poor Honor if she has been an *informer?*"

There was silence; the elder was past being excited; but she lay pondering the question before she answered, with a faint smile, "I'd like to know first what you found to inform about, darling. Tell me."

Honor knelt, and laid her face close to her ear. "It was one night that Tonio came while you were out, and he and Jones got talking. I had heard them before, and I misdoubted them, and so I listened: and it was about a plan for robbing Mr. Bruce, as they had tried twice before. Some great gentleman had recommended Tonio as courier, on purpose that he might have another chance, and promised him a great reward if he brought back the jewels Mr. Bruce wore round his neck. And I heard him say that if he got him down again he'd not let him slip as he did before."

"Honor, darling, are you sure? You do fancy things sometimes."

"If it was my last words I had to speak, it's all true—and there was more that I can't remember. I longed to tell you when you came home, but I was afraid you wouldn't believe me, and that they'd find it out, and I'd be half murdered. But when I thought I was dying, it seemed as if I couldn't keep it in, and I told the doctor, that he might give the gentleman warning; and I suppose he did; and perhaps that's why Tonio didn't make any money. Oh, nurse, nurse, she's looking so bad! Have I killed her?"

"No, my dear; but you soon will if you are not more careful. Go into the next room. There is a visitor waiting to see you."

Honor, half blind with weeping, did not see who her visitor was, till she was in the pitying arms of Grace Pyne. Clinging round her neck, and sure of her sympathy, she poured out her tale of grief and terror, and received such comfort as could be derived from the assurance that she had done quite right. After awhile, the nurse came to invite them to the patient's bedside. On Grace's stooping to kiss her cheek, Caterina's large eyes brightened a little—very little, for she was sinking fast.

"There's no paint there now," she said, with a smile, that went to Grace's heart, remembering how she had disliked her profession. The broken requests came dropping out one by one. "Give my love to Lucy—be kind to mother—ask the gentlemen to forgive Tonio—try and give Honor a little country air."

They were her last clearly expressed wishes. Save to follow the ministrations of her own Church, she never spoke again.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

CASTLE DANGEROUS.

When Edith Bruce heard the carriage drive off that conveyed her husband from her, it is no disparagement to her good sense to confess that she felt lonely and dismayed; with an indescribable longing to rush after him, and share his unknown danger, which might be greater than hers. That she should have thought of danger at all, independently of railway contingencies, might be accounted for by the adventures they had already gone through; but she had been superior to all such weakness while Gabriel was there: giving him commissions, and messages to Alice Kerr (now on a visit to Mrs. Salisbury, in London), as if his going up to town had been an ordinary matter of business for the general convenience. "Mind," were her last words, "nothing will be too great a sacrifice for the sake of the Ironhand, even if we have to re-open your store. I think Lucy and I could do that as well as you and Joel."

And her smile cheered the men's hearts as a brave woman's always does, enabling them to turn where duty led them: but not the less did her own heart sink within her when they were really gone. They could not reach London in time for any post; their train was slow and unpunctual. It was no use counting the hours; home duties must be attended to—the first being Clare, before whom a dauntless aspect had to be maintained at all hazards. Into this precaution her attendants entered with ready zeal. Lucy, especially, clothed herself in armour of cheerfulness, which did not quite fit, and therefore clattered the more. Mrs. Carroll could not but overhear Lucy's vehement self-gratulation on the capital opportunity for needlework afforded by the absence of the master and Joel. Men were all very well in the house sometimes, but dear me, they took up a lot of your time in running after them, and never reckoned up that the more you ran the less you could sew; and stockings and buttons were expected to take care of themselves. Then Mrs. Bruce summoned her sister to a consultation about flower beds, declaring that Joel could make Gabriel agree to anything, and only cared for the kitchen garden; but that now she had a chance of having her own way, and should make the most of her opportunity. So she kept Bob Medland busy all the afternoon, and got several things done which had been postponed for private reasons of Joel's; and by the time Philip Forrest, who had been visiting one or two of the cottages, joined them at the meal he had especially bespoken, "high tea," in all the luxury of Devonshire produce, there was so much to say about what they had all been doing, that care could *not* get a word in edgeways.

It bided its time; and, as evening drew on—faster, it seemed, than usual—Edith could not hide from herself her nervous dread of the night. Clare, tired, as she said, with laughing, had thrown herself

down on the sofa; and Mrs. Bruce, after feeding Settler, was lingering at the hall door, trying to get the better of the image that would present itself—that of Dr. Nelson's innocent young wife, who had been frightened to death in that house, and whose fate she never recalled without a shudder—when Philip came to look after her. He saw at once what she was feeling, and that she was ashamed of it; especially as she tried to look quite unconcerned, and made some remark on the heavy dew.

"I think," he said, quietly, "there is rather more dew to-night than the garden requires, but I hope it is a sign of fair weather."

She looked quickly round, and, as he had surmised, her eyes were full of tears, though they did not fall.

"By the way," he went on, "about the brigand, if he comes—do you mean to shoot him, or must I?"

"I deserve to be laughed at," she owned, as she dashed her tears away.

"Laughed at? What will you think of me when I tell you that I jumped as if I had been shot just now, fancying I heard some one behind me on the stairs. My only regret is that Thirza is not here. I would give anything to see her face under such circumstances as ours at this minute."

"She would be quite sure it was all my fault," said Edith, smiling.

"Yes; it was all your fault that Bruce became one of the richest men I know."

"Your acquaintance are not very wealthy, then," said she, with a doubtful shake of her head.

"That is more than you can tell; but I can tell you this—that struggle for fortune was the making of Gabriel, and if we loved him before, we have respected him doubly since. Seeing as we do the friends he brought back with him, and the effect of his influence on them both, I think we may trace a higher hand in the matter than any of ours, and that a special work was reserved for him there, whose result is only just begun. And knowing what he has won, I maintain my first proposition that he is a rich man—and would be, if he lost all his money to-morrow."

She thanked him with a glowing smile, and returned to the drawing-room, so cheered in spirits, as to be ready to make a good story of Philip's alarm, though ignoring her own. He had gone to fetch a volume of Shakespeare, but returned with his hat in his hand, to announce that he had been sent for to visit old Bess Cheveril. She was said to be dying, and asked for the minister; so he was going at once. Startled, but not liking to own it, Mrs. Bruce asked who had brought the message, and why it had not been taken to the rectory? It was old Medland: and he said that she wished to see the new gentleman, who had promised to come when asked for. The old man would show him the nearest way, and as Dr. Nelson had been sent for, he would give him a lift home. It was so plain

that he was going as a matter of course, that Edith could only follow him to the door, to see that he took precautions against the night air, and then returned to her sister. She found her putting up her work.

"My dear," said Tiny, "I do not know what you feel, or what you may think it your duty to do, but *I* am going to bed. The only safe place in a thunderstorm is under the bed-clothes, and this is a great deal worse. I could no more sit here to wait for ghosts and robbers than I could fly. Ring for nurse; she always did take care of me when I was frightened, and she will now. If I can hold the corner of her apron it will be something."

"Well!" thought Mrs. Bruce, when thus deserted, "I wonder how Lucy feels, alone in her kitchen."

She had not long to wonder, for hearing some one in the hall, she found Lucy in front of the clock.

"I beg your pardon, ma'am; I thought it might be going to strike."

"It never strikes, Lucy."

"Yes, ma'am, indeed it does—when there's some one in it."

"There can be nobody now; Mr. Bruce took care of that. You shall judge for yourself."

She was going to unlock the door, but with a shriek of terror the valiant Lucy ran away. Edith laughed, called young Medland, and announced her intention of going round the premises with him and Settler. The fears of the others had so ludicrous an effect, that she now felt none at all. Medland, however, seemed not so fortunate. He tried in vain to dissuade her from the attempt; and when that failed, begged her to leave Settler indoors. Mr. Martin was very particular about not letting him do anything without orders, and if any idle fellows should be lurking about, as they did sometimes, to pick up the sticks, or poach the trout, they might throw him a bit of poisoned meat; he had known such things done. Very well, Edith said, she would not take the dog, but she was going herself, and he must attend her.

"Shall I bring you the gun, ma'am?"

"The gun? No, thank you; we shall both be safer without it," she said, colouring with a mixture of amusement and vexation, for it was evident that Medland firmly believed in her having shot any number of brigands. He followed her without further opposition, and she went the rounds as methodically as Gabriel could have done, only pausing now and then to admire the beauty of the night, which was now so warm that it was a pleasure to be in the open air. The moon had not yet risen, but the stars shone brightly, and, in her simple, womanly faith, she felt as if fear would have been disgraceful in a scene so exquisitely still. Once she was sure she heard a rustling movement, but Medland said it was only a rabbit; and at last she returned to the house just as Lucy was coming to say Mrs. Carroll wanted to see her.

As soon as she was safe indoors Medland slipped out again; and, keeping carefully in the shadow, ran to the covered well. The wood-pile beside it was shelter enough to conceal anyone from casual observation, and, on approaching it, he slackened his pace.

"Are you there, Tonio?" he whispered.

The wood was quietly put aside, and a face peered out, followed by the whole figure.

"You have kept me waiting a long time," was his first greeting. "Is all safe?"

"There is no one about but me. The lady is gone in."

"Well for her! If she had come in my way I would have given her a fright for once. Aye, I would. I have done it before, and I would do it again."

"Was it you that killed the doctor's wife?" said Medland, his teeth chattering as he spoke.

"Killed her? No, I never touched her. But I gave her a fright, and I'll give you one if you don't do as I tell you. We must get this well open. Come, I mean you to take your share in the work, and so I tell you."

"The parson will be back. You'll be caught in the act."

"He'll not be here for an hour. Don't you think we took care of that? Your father knows what to do."

Cowed, as it seemed, by his imperious associate, Bob did as he was told. The well being opened, Tonio went to work to clear the planks laid across the ledge, and then compelled Medland to assist in removing them. By this time the moon had risen sufficiently to throw light on the spot, and Tonio, leaning over and probing the depth with a long stake, satisfied himself that there was a second layer of planks on a lower ledge. This tallied with the old woman's words confided to him by Mrs. Medland. His ready fingers had quickly lashed a cord round the stem of a young tree close by, and secured the other end round his own waist; then having let down his basket of tools, and swung a dark lantern round his neck, he cautiously descended, and commenced his search for Jack Cheveril's deposit. How long he was thus employed he was too absorbed to calculate; but he was suddenly startled by the darkening of the moonlight, and in the very act of laying his hand on an oilskin packet stowed away among the brickwork, he discovered that the cover was being replaced on the well. A volley of threats and curses was his first impulse, his second a gush of promises; but Bob heeded neither. With the energy of desperation he drove the heavy covering firmly on, and then piled the wood on the top till he was completely out of breath. "There," he said; "now he'll keep till morning, and then he'll be glad to make good terms."

He hurried back to the house, and meeting Lucy, she asked him, rather severely, what he had been about to make himself such a figure?—upon which he told her he had found the well uncovered,

and had been making it all safe, "and when Mr. Treherne comes back perhaps you'll just tell him that I did it."

"That was what made Settler so angry. I couldn't keep him quiet, and he frightened Mrs. Carroll. I'll run up and tell them it was only you."

Rather sooner than had been predicted, Philip Forrest returned, as much put out as it was in his nature to be, having been delayed by old Medland's short cut, which proved to be a long round, and then finding the patient asleep, and not at all like a person near her end. They had tried to persuade him to await her wakening, but, his suspicions being aroused, he had started homewards alone. Nothing appeared to have occurred in his absence; and, the fastenings having been all looked to, the household went quietly to bed.

How much Bob slept is not known, but with the peep of day he was at the well; and had scarcely reached it before Mr. Forrest was at his side, sternly asking what he was going to do. Bob fell on his knees, and confessed then and there that he had once stolen some spoons, and a rogue who knew it had threatened to expose him if he didn't help him in a job; that he had come to do the job last night, and he had caught him in a trap, and was just going to look at him—that was all. And so evident was the truth of what he said, that Philip was seriously alarmed. A man left in such a position might be in the greatest danger. The well must be opened that moment. By their united efforts it was done: but no one was there. The broken cord was hanging down, and the planks were broken through. Medland's exultation changed into terror; he thought his enemy had escaped. But Philip's dread was of a different kind. He was hurrying down towards the river to obtain assistance from a neighbouring cottage, when he heard Settler barking furiously; and, following the sound, he traced the dog into a thicket, whose boughs and tangled shrubs almost touched the water, and which it was not easy to penetrate. When penetrated, it revealed a broken arch of masonry, evidently once a drain, and it furnished the missing clue to the mystery of both house and well. It communicated with both, and Tonio had evidently attempted to escape by it: but his rope had failed, or his footing slipped, and he lay near the entrance unable to crawl a yard further, in so piteous a plight that even Bob could afford to pity him. The labourers who had been summoned to help, carried him to the cottage, and Dr. Nelson was sent for. He found the leg broken, the back severely sprained; besides bruises innumerable. To move him again would have been too great a risk, so the cottage was made a hospital for the time, and all needful comforts were sent down to it by the ladies. Medland grumbled at all this anxiety and tenderness being shown to such an object: but even he was silenced when Philip reminded him how nearly he had been liable to be called to account for the man's death.

"You did good service, and will be rewarded, never fear; and

after this I trust we shall hear no more of these alarms," said Philip, in whose breast pocket at that moment was safely deposited the packet which had cost so dear, and been so strangely recovered.

It was opened that evening, in the presence of the canon and the doctor, and it became at once apparent that some one must take it up to London immediately; "either you or I, Frank," said Philip, "whichever can be spared." The doctor shook his head, and beckoned him apart. "I must not leave that man," he said, "his case is too critical. Don't tell these kind-hearted women, but I have just found out how *that* happened: the terror that destroyed my wife. Medland gave me a hint, and the fellow owns it."

Mr. Forrest wrung his friend's hand, and turned away to hide his own emotion. The story, however, got wind in spite of the doctor's reticence, and all knew, far and near, that he was sitting up at night, and visiting by day, the man who had killed his wife. Such a fact was enough for simple folks, and Dr. Nelson was adored by his patients from that hour.

Before Philip Forrest started, a letter arrived from Gabriel, to whom we must now return.

A note from Hartley Carroll had met Gabriel at the London terminus, to request that, late as it was, he would meet him at Sir Jesse Strahan's. On arriving there with Joel, they were both struck by the hushed, awestricken appearance of the servants and the stillness of the house, but were little prepared for the intelligence awaiting them. Sir Jesse had been found in his chair about eight in the morning, so near his end, that all the efforts of three physicians failed to revive the sinking animation. For some hours they persisted, Mrs. Salisbury, who had been summoned in haste, lending all the assistance her experience could afford; but he died towards noon—a fact of which Hartley was not aware till some hours later. His time had been spent, under Mr. Herbert's advice, in first releasing Mr. Plummer, and then examining his evidence; and it was on his arrival in the evening, prepared, at all risks, to confront his former ally with proofs for which he believed him unprepared, that he learned the awful doom which had cut Sir Jesse's schemes short—a doom so closely connected with the history of the diamonds, that the published reports of the inquest derived a double interest from the light it threw on the Craggs Court affair.

Sir Jesse Strahan's death had one material effect: those whom fear or cupidity would have kept silent, or tempted to untruth, found their own interest in coming forward to give evidence. Bilson's brother, as soon as he learned the state of the case, took the matter into his own hands, and convinced her that as her annuity was lost, her only chance was to appear as a witness, and prove she had acted under orders. And Darch Williams would have been arrested by her means, only Slade, who, as well as the so-called superintendent, had been the paid spy of the dead man

got the start of her, and had him and the diamonds in his safe keeping already. The news of his old employer's death was a shock which seemed to paralyse Darch at first; but his courage revived, and he expressed his satisfaction that the truth should be known at last. He had been misrepresented all his life, and now everybody would do him justice.

Our space is far too limited to give more than a very brief summary of the facts on which he so confidently relied; and to save time, we must begin with others, which had no immediate connection with them. That all could be made clear to the parties concerned at this juncture, or indeed at any other, we are not prepared to show; but the reader's convenience will be best considered by throwing the history into one condensed form.

Sir Jesse Strahan, wealthy as he was when he died, had twice been on the brink of ruin. The first time, it was in connection with an enterprise into which he had led Desmond Moreton: who, absorbed in his mechanical studies, trusted to his sagacity about his investments. Without hinting at the risk they both ran of losing all they had invested, he made him believe that Miss Wyatt's fortune could be doubled by its being embarked in the same speculation; and Desmond, without enquiry, took his advice, discovering, when too late, that his counsellor had contrived to extricate himself at his ward's expense, and that he had himself violated his sacred trust, in not defending her from such spoliation. It preyed on his mind, already overwrought; and having secured a provision for his faithful clerk, he refunded the fortune as far as his means would allow, only reserving sufficient to convey himself and his boy to the exile whence he never returned. His intention had evidently been to destroy all his papers; but he overlooked an important number, which old Martin collected and treasured up, always hoping for his return. After the announcement of his death, the old clerk examined and studied these papers, and their perusal confirmed his own previous conviction of the real state of the case. He had always distrusted Sir Jesse, and grieved over his influence with Desmond—now he looked upon him as the author of his ruin. And with what justice may be understood by the fact that the belief in his holding such an opinion made Sir Jesse endeavour to gain a hold upon him through Mr. Plummer, whose own path had been sufficiently crooked to lead him into the worst of snares—the power of an unscrupulous patron.

The second crisis in Sir Jesse's career was about the period of his wife's last illness. In obtaining possession of the famous diamonds, his first object, no doubt, was to blind the judgment of the world with a display of affluence; but the pressure of necessity soon made room for the temptation to turn them to account. Old Oram was taken into his councils, and recommended him the only workman on whom he could depend—Darch Williams: who was engaged, for what seemed to him a large reward, to imitate the finest of the

diamonds, and place the false in the setting of the true. Some of the smaller brilliants were left untouched, and the whole was so skilfully done, that only an experienced eye would have suspected the truth. Darch Williams was got rid of, and the relief obtained arriving just in time, Sir Jesse's fortunes recovered themselves, and never failed him again. But before he was able to redeem the diamonds, they were lost in the Craggs Court affair, whose mystery was known to him, and his only hope was that no discovery would be made before the ornaments should be again in his power—at Mrs. Salisbury's death. When Darch returned to England with the news that Mr. Bruce had found the lost gems in Australia, and carried them about his person, the dread of exposure made Sir Jesse at once buy Darch's co-operation, and the whole arrangement about his daughter's portrait was, as the reader has already surmised, a part of the scheme for concealing his first fraud. He excused the proceeding to his conscience as reparation, not robbery; and had it been crowned with success, he had planned the expatriation of Darch Williams in such a fashion as would, he hoped, have secured himself from any further hazard. Of the evidence lying concealed in the well at Lowlevels, he of course knew nothing; nor could he surmise that the attempts made there by thieves at different times, was owing to the rumour among them that some of the Craggs Court booty had been hidden there. Jack Cheveril's remorse had nearly led him to Mrs. Salisbury's feet, to confess his crime and restore his share—but his courage failing him, he left it, as we have seen, together with the papers relating to the transaction, which he had taken from the old man's secret drawer with the jewels.

The story of poor Zack was only partially known, but it was conjectured that the fear of his evidence made Hughes and Cheveril kidnap him, and it was certain that he was with them in Australia. It appeared that they all suffered from fever in the bush, and Hughes was the first to succumb, without having reaped the smallest advantage from his crime. His share was much the largest, but he had not dared to dispose of any of it, and Cheveril only survived him a week, leaving a few words written on the fly-leaf of a torn book, stating that the rest of the diamonds were hidden at Lowlevels, in Devonshire, and begging whoever found this paper to restore them—he did not explain to whom. The poor idiot, after their death, in wandering for food, fell into the hands of the hard masters from whom Gabriel rescued him; though unable to avert the fate that befell him at last. Surprised by his old persecutor Darch, when no help was near, his resistance provoked him to violence, and Bruce and his friends found him bleeding from a wound on the head, but more coherent than he had ever been before. His memory and understanding flashed for a moment in the socket, and he guided them at last to the spot he had sought so often in vain—the hut where the treasure was left by the dead body of Jack Cheveril. There he died,

and was buried with his former associate; and the three friends, after dividing the gems, made a covenant not to part from them, or each other, till they had restored them to their owner.

Such being the facts, it is scarcely necessary to explain that the first deposition of Darch Williams was the result of an interview with his patron; he himself frankly acknowledged it at the inquest, and that but for his death, he should have persisted in the charge, believing that Martin had made Grace Pyne betray him. He had heard Grace Pyne's evidence, and it was true, every word, as far as he knew. The blow was given him by his mate, Tonio Peretti, in a quarrel they had after his failure in the plot to rob Mr. Bruce abroad.

So many points came out in this first examination, that the inquest was necessarily adjourned, and orders were given for the attendance of Erasmus Martin, the Ironhand, whose connection with the deceased was just beginning to be understood. We cannot attempt to describe with what sensations Mrs. Salisbury learned the truth; it was well for her at her age that one shock had a neutralising effect on the other, and that the horror and agitation of Sir Jesse's death were alleviated by the thrill of thankfulness that woke up the dormant yearnings of her motherly love. All the past was forgiven—the estrangement, the bitterness, the disappointments, which had been one of her heaviest trials; she had felt drawn to that young man the first day she saw him, and now she understood why. And she wept in Alice's arms as she told her the wonderful news; and Alice, terrified at her own sensations, as if some tremendous change were coming over her whole life, returned her caresses with a flood of sympathy.

But the next day, and the next, passed, and the solemn enquiry was still prolonged, and yet Martin had not been found. He might never have been found again, but for a small instrument, overlooked by friend and foe.

An emigrant ship was waiting at Gravesend for the tide, and 'Liza had gone down to take leave of her George, who, as a help towards growing steady, had engaged as one of the crew. The little mission vessel had conveyed several kindly visitants on board, with books, and gifts, and parting words of holy counsel; and David Forrest, among other clergy, had gone to take a last look at some of his people. There he caught sight of a face whose wide mouth and mischievous eyes could never be mistaken. With one bound he had his strong hand on Bill Close's collar, and dragged him to light on the deck.

"Bill, I insist upon it, tell me why you are here."

Bill would have kicked anybody else, but Mr. Forrest was inviolable, so he only grinned in silence. George, however, promptly supplied the answer. "He's going to the diggings, sir, with the Ironhand."

"My good, dear lad, is the Ironhand on board? Thank God! Take me to him—all right, Bill," as the boy began something about not betraying him. "He shall go if he likes, and you too, but I must see him first."

Bill would still have made a difficulty, but was silenced by George. And in a few minutes David stood in the close, crowded cabin, where stretched in his berth, sad, ill, and suffering, lay Martin the Ironhand.

The bruise in his side, received at the theatre, had in fact proved serious; and the sleeplessness and pain he had suffered had been aggravated by distress of mind. His purpose had been to depart unobserved, and write to Gabriel when out of reach; but Bill Close had found him out, and, charmed with the prospect of bush life in his company, had stuck to him in spite of remonstrance.

"I knew it was bad for the poor chap," faltered the hunter, in apology, "but I was too ill to see about sending him back. You'll take him home with you, and keep my secret. I can't face them all, to hear what must be said—and Bruce will not believe that fellow's story—or if he does ——"

"If he does, you shall sail by the next ship, and I'll go with you, but at present you are wanted at home; and out of this ship I don't stir without you. Here is George to back me when I say it. My dear fellow, would I stop you if God's finger pointed to you to go? How, then, can I let you go when He is holding you back? Trust me so far—others have done so, and never regretted it—I tell you in His name, that it rests with you, under His blessing, to take up your father's work, redeem his honour, and cherish his mother's old age. If it be painful, never mind—you can bear pain as well as any man—but this I promise you, you will not have to bear disgrace. The truth has been wonderfully preserved for you, and as wonderfully has come to light."

We could fill another volume with our history, but must leave the reader to imagine it for himself. An invalid almost for the first time in his life, the admission of Erasmus to his place in the family, and his station in the world, was made he hardly knew how; all that he was really conscious of was the new world of motherly tenderness that was like a foretaste of heaven. His whole nature seemed to soften under its influence; and instead of the resentful, defiant spirit in which he might have encountered society's wondering curiosity, all thought of self was lost in the yearning to repay love with love, and make some atonement for the past. The first real confidence between him and his grandmother, when they could speak of business at all, came from her intense sympathy in the matter of Bruce's lost inheritance. No matter whose the fault—that must be made good, if Highlevels were let for the remainder of her days.

It proved, however, to be unnecessary. Sir Jesse's will, made after a former illness, revealed his secret reliance on her as his

daughter's best protector, for he left her sole guardian and trustee, and bequeathed her the sum of ten thousand pounds. That this would be laid out on the estate, which would pass ultimately to Myra, was of course his belief; but both Mrs. Salisbury and her grandson looked upon it as a tardy restitution: and in due course of time, the old wrong was, as far as might be, redeemed.

Darch Williams and Bilson disappeared immediately after the inquest. Clever as he was, he could not escape the net he had twined for himself. No proceedings were taken against them, and the affair of the diamonds was put into the hands of the lawyers. Grace received a letter of farewell from Paris, where Mr. Jones (or Williams) and his wife had settled for the present; he having, by his own account, the promise of work at high wages. The letter cost Grace some tears, but the sting of that grief had lost its power. Her own happiness might be gone, but she could live for that of others; so many claimed her that she would never be without employment; and, indeed, she became the treasure of Mrs. Bruce's household, when Joel, his term of willing service ending with the willing delivery of his jewel-case, bought a little farm with his Australian gold, and carried away Lucy to be its head. There poor Honor always found a welcome, and, in time, a home; whether Bob Medland will ever do as he vows he will, and earn enough to make her his wife, remains to be seen. He was well rewarded for his behaviour, and has always exulted in the acuteness of his own judgment—that Mr. Martin held the good cards. We may just remark that Tonio, who was for months under Dr. Nelson's care, and allowed to escape punishment, save the lameness he had brought on himself, repaid his benefactor by regularly sending him begging letters.

It may be remembered that Sir Jesse Strahan gave Hartley Carroll a hint, through which he hoped to regain some of his old influence. It proved to be valuable enough to justify the reputation of the great speculator, and offered Hartley a chance of retrieving his fortunes; one which might never occur again. But it required fresh capital, and he knew not where to find it. Quite unexpectedly, Mr. Herbert announced that a client had the money to invest; and the enterprise, freed from the baneful influence of Sir Jesse, was the re-opening of a channel of prosperity: which in time relieved Carroll of all fear that he should be the ruin of Gabriel. The lesson Hartley had learned was not thrown away, and he and his wife were happier ever after for the passing trial. It was long before he knew that the relief had come from the Ironhand's Australian gold.

Helen Ford did not return to England for some time after the news of Sir Jesse's death. She persuaded her brother to spend a year or two in Italy, and invited Alice Kerr to join them, and study art at the fountain-head. But Alice could not be spared. All the love of which she was capable, Myra Strahan seemed to have given to her artist friend; and her mind became more healthy, her moral faculties

less obtuse, in the intercourse with the fresh young nature, itself in a happy spring-tide of growth and culture, with summer near at hand.

Alice's home was at Lowlevels, where Gabriel and Edith, after their period of anxiety, were tasting some of the purest happiness that earth can bestow; but whenever Erasmus went to London, she was sent for by Mrs. Salisbury to the great house: and during the whole of that winter and spring, the claims of business took him away very often. He had furnished a set of rooms for his old godfather, under the special guardianship of Burns, and lodged with him when obliged to be in town. One day, returning to Highlevels unexpectedly, he was received by Myra with reproaches, that now he was come, Alice would go away—and she had promised to teach her how to earn money. She did not mind giving some of it away afterwards, if only she might earn it first, and no one but Alice could show her how. Her cousin, whose pet she had long become, whispered a word or two in her ear, which sent her away in breathless haste; and Mrs. Salisbury was astounded by the question, whether Alice might stay with them altogether? Impossible; who had put it into her head? Erasmus. Oh! that altered the case, and the sooner they knew what he meant the better. So in search of Erasmus they went, and were met by him at the library door. "She will stay if you consent," he began; and the next moment Alice was in the old lady's arms, pressed lovingly to her bosom.

On that tender resting-place we leave her, confident that her lesson on chivalry was prophetic; that the spurs of the knight will be won by the squire—the brand of shame and sorrow taken away by the touch of the Cross.

THE END.

IN MEMORIAM.

"On the 28th Oct., at Nice, in the 54th year of her age, JULIA, only child of the late MORGAN PETER KAVANAGH, Esq., of the County of Kildare, and of his wife, BRIDGET FITZPATRICK. Her loss is much deplored by her affectionate mother, as well as by the numerous friends who valued her writings."

SUCH was the sad and most unexpected announcement in the *Times* of Nov. 6th. It was impossible for anyone who had enjoyed the friendship of Julia Kavanagh to read it without a feeling of emotion and deep regret. Suddenly, at eight o'clock on that calm Sunday morning, the spirit of Julia Kavanagh passed away to its rest.

For a considerable time Miss Kavanagh had been a daily martyr to neuralgia, and she and I had frequently compared notes and sympathized with each other upon our experiences of this painful affection. But only a few days before the end I had received a letter from her in which she gave me an improved account of her health, and a hope that erelong she should be completely restored. It was not to be.

My acquaintance with Miss Kavanagh commenced some years ago. At that time I was living in Paris. A great portion of Miss Kavanagh's life had been spent in France. Her knowledge of the French language was equal to that of her own, and she spoke it with equal purity. She composed in French with the same facility as in English. Had she not possessed so much original talent she would have made an admirable translator in both languages. Very frequently after attending service on a Sunday morning at the Ambassador's chapel, I would go on to the Rue Ponthieu, and spend a few hours in delightful conversation with Mrs. and Miss Kavanagh. These afternoons remain one of my pleasantest reminiscences of those days. Julia Kavanagh was as intellectual in her conversations as in her writings, combined with an almost childlike simplicity of manner and rectitude of thought. Then, and at all times, it was touching to witness the love and devotion of mother and daughter for each other, and it is impossible to think of the aged mother, in her almost blindness, without the most heartfelt sorrow and sympathy.

In person, Julia Kavanagh was extremely small. I had frequently asked her for her photograph; but her last allusion to that subject was as follows: "I really cannot send to you the dark and evil-looking thing they tell me is myself. But some years ago a friend sketched me in water colours, and I have asked him to send it to you." It came in due time, and hangs before me as I write. A youngish woman, at a desk on an ordinary table; her arms are crossed in contemplation: thinking out, perhaps, a plot or problem. Beside her is a book-case, and before her a bowl of old china, which

contained some object of feminine work. In person, I have said, she was extremely small. But it was impossible to look at those large, luminous brown eyes, full of goodness and softness: impossible to note the magnificently shaped head surmounted by coil after coil of most beautiful hair, without feeling yourself in the presence of more than ordinary intellectual capacity. And although it is not intended in this short notice to enter upon the subject of Miss Kavanagh's literary merits, it may be mentioned that scarcely in her novels does she show the greatest capacities of her mind.

Although but middle-aged, Miss Kavanagh is somehow associated in our thoughts with a literary period that has gone by: the period that knew Charlotte Brontë and Thackeray: days of which we now read with so much melancholy pleasure. There is a double charm in hearing of days and people that were before our time; and many a conversation had Miss Kavanagh and I about the days in question. I remember well her telling me of her first meeting with Charlotte Brontë. It was at an evening party at Thackeray's, very soon after the author of *Jane Eyre* had been openly recognised.

"Charlotte Brontë," said Julia Kavanagh, "soon after she entered the room, came up; and sitting down beside me on the sofa, fixed her eyes upon me for some time. Then she said, slowly—and they were the first words I heard her speak—'The intellectual faculties largely developed: I have no doubt the moral also.'"

Charlotte Brontë was right. It was impossible to look at the pure depths of those large brown eyes without feeling that goodness held an equal sway with talent. Everything about Julia Kavanagh betokened that she was highly religious, but more than all, her life spoke of it. Her two great affections were her mother and her work. "I was always compelled to write," she one day remarked to me. "From a child I was always making up tales. It came to me as naturally as sleep. And yet I never satisfy myself in my plots. I am shackled also. Mamma insists upon my ending every story happily. In vain I tell her that it is not true to life. It is because of that very fact, she replies; because there is so much unhappiness in real life, that she will insist upon nothing but sunshine in my tales. Writing, after a time, becomes as necessary as one's daily food."

But there came a day when writing had to be put away. At the outbreak of the Franco-German war, Miss Kavanagh and her mother fled to Rouen for refuge, though even there they did not escape some of the terrors of that time. Subsequently they went to Nice. Paris did not suit the mother's health, and the devoted daughter lived only in the mother's happiness and welfare. From that time I never saw her—was never to see her again—but we kept up a frequent and interesting correspondence. The greater portion of last year and of this, Miss Kavanagh was a daily martyr to neuralgia. Night after night would be spent in sleepless agony. All work had to be laid aside. In vain I wrote to her to leave Nice, and give trial

to the climate of England. In the hot summer months the two ladies would migrate into the mountains to breathe purer, fresher air than that of Nice, and this summer, as it seemed, with greater success. From these mountainous retreats Julia Kavanagh would write me interesting and pleasant letters, telling me of her quiet life; and many a time I had said that I would go down and renew my friendship by personal intercourse. But one opportunity after another was neglected and put off, and became lost for ever. I will place her last two notes before the reader, but with diffidence and apology, as one of them contains a personal allusion that under other circumstances one could only refrain from publishing. Face to face with the Great Reality to which we must all pay tribute in turn, the smaller thoughts and motives of the world lose their influence. The reader will bear in mind that it is the expression of a kind and partial friend :—

"Saint Dalmas, *September*, 1877.

"My dear Mr. Wood,—Of course, I had scarcely written to you that I could not let you have another story, than, woman-like, I changed my mind, and I sat down and indited the following tale, which, to say the truth, has been in my mind *three* years. I think you will like it. Perhaps it will do for the Christmas Number; but pray do not shorten it.

"I write from Piedmont, in an old convent: but there is no post-office within miles; so I shall not dispatch my story till we reach Nice: at the end of the week, I hope, for change of air has not done my neuralgia much good. I suppose it escapes general rules.

"I cannot tell you what a blessing the Argosy proved here! An English lady, who goes wild on a Sunday — this is a very pretty, but very dull place — went into transports when I came to the rescue with your precious pages. Mamma and I were especially delighted with *Holland*. It is as good as travelling without the fatigue of it.

"Pray thank Mrs. Wood very kindly for her letter. It cheered and comforted me as a kind remembrance always does when one is low — and I was so just then.

"I have been writing the whole morning, and must abridge this epistle, as I am far from strong.

"Nice, *September* 30*th*, 1877.

"I finish my letter here, and send it with 'Clement's Love.' I have taken great pains with it, and shall be affronted if you do not like it much.

"I have no English news of the *Fairy Tales*, but they are coming out in the Tauchnitz edition—I mean the edition for children's books.

"Saint Dalmas was already very cold when we left, and the heat of Nice is very agreeable to such chilly bodies as we are.

"And now, au revoir, my dear Mr. Wood. Many thanks for the Argosy, to which I hope to become once more a contributor; as,

though I am still very unwell, I think I am a *little* better. Mamma unites in kind regards, and I am, as ever,

"Yours truly, JULIA KAVANAGH."

When this letter reached its destination I was in Cornwall, amidst the scenery of the North Coast, also of Devon and Somerset: the fine outlines of Boscastle and Tintagel; the more luxuriant beauties of Clovelly and Ilfracombe, Lynton and Lynmouth, with the rugged Valley of Rocks, and the more charming and wonderfully beautiful Valley of *East Lynn*. Consequently Miss Kavanagh's MS. and letter remained unacknowledged, and the following note was the result:—

"NICE, Alpes Maritimes, *October 13th*, 1877.

"MY DEAR MR. WOOD,—I sent you, a fortnight ago, a little story, called 'Clement's Love.' Has it reached you safely? I am getting uneasy about my poor Clement, and fear he has been wrecked in the post-office ocean. I wrote to you at the same time. Will you kindly let me know if Clement is all right?

"I trust you have been tolerably free from our common enemy, neuralgia. I was a martyr to it the whole summer, but am getting much better, thank Heaven.

"Mamma unites in kind regards, and I am, as ever,

"Yours truly, JULIA KAVANAGH."

"Clement's Love," however, reached me safely. It cannot fail to bear great additional interest to the reader from the fact that with it Julia Kavanagh takes her leave for ever of these pages, which her tales have so often adorned. In her short stories she was, I think, even happier than in her longer ones. I know that it gave her more pleasure to write them. Especially good was one which appeared some years ago in the ARGOSY—"Sylvie's Vow." But her best story was one called "By the Well," which appeared yet earlier in *Temple Bar*. I once remarked to her: "That was the best story you ever wrote."—"Yes," she replied emphatically; "it was the best story I ever wrote, and it cost me the least effort."

In one of the above letters, Miss Kavanagh hopes once more to become a contributor to the ARGOSY. This hope was not to be fulfilled. The hand that penned the words, that penned "Clement's Love," almost before the ink was dry upon the paper, was to lie cold and still. The life's work was done. It is a strange fact and coincidence that this story is the only one of Miss Kavanagh's that has an unhappy ending: perhaps the only one she ever so ended. It is as though a presentiment haunted the writer of what was so soon to be. "She (Angélique) took up her bundle, and with one sad look around her, she walked down the path that led to the sea. . . . . She shunned the village, and entered the lane that lies at the back of the houses. The sun had long left it. It was shadowy and

dim, and in the dimness and the shadow the figure of Angélique slowly vanished, and thus passed away for ever from Manneville."

These words might almost be applied to their writer. They are probably the last she ever wrote in the way of story. Julia Kavanagh has passed away for ever from the earth. Like Angélique, she has walked down the path that leads to the sea, the great sea of Eternity. All the deep mysteries of the unseen world are now revealed to her. Her work is over: industrious, unceasing work—and her life. But with her the end of this life is but the beginning of the fuller and more perfect life to which she was ever tending. She has gone where her good works follow her. She has left a name behind her that all know, and those love most who knew her best. Let this be a consolation to that mother who is left to mourn the loss of her only child: the constant companion of her life; the stay and delight of her old age. With David she may say, "I shall go to her, but she will not return to me." For myself, when thinking of the loss of a much valued friend, and contemplating the grief of the lonely and stricken mother, it is difficult to see the dark cloud of sorrow for the full blaze beyond of unfading happiness and glory.

CHARLES W. WOOD.

CLEMENT'S LOVE.

BY JULIA KAVANAGH.

EVERY little place has its doubtful character, its scapegoat, its bête noire, its vehicle for mischief, its embodiment of wickedness; we do not speak of crime, but of that form of wrong which the law cannot touch, but which the good deplore and the respectable abhor. Manneville would not have thought itself fit to be put down on the map if it had not had such a person every now and then. That person a few years ago happened to be a beautiful girl, tall, fair and strong, with azure eyes and golden hair; a girl fresh as a rose, and whose name, of all names, was Angélique.

She was an orphan. She had been reared by a weak old uncle, who let her grow up as she pleased, provided she did not trouble him. And as she cost him little or nothing—for she was not merely strong, but also clever, and would work hard and get well paid for her work, and moreover do anything she was pleased to turn her hand to—he let Angélique have her way till he died, and she remained alone in his little dark shingle house, perched on the cliff overlooking the sea on one side, and the valley and the village on the other.

The uncle of Angélique had no inheritance to leave with which the law could meddle. The house in which he had lived nearly all his life was not his: and as Angélique at once offered to pay the rent

beforehand—and did so—her landlord, Maître André Grandsire, was too shrewd a Norman to turn out so safe a tenant.

"You see, boy," he said to his son Germain, "the girl gives no trouble. If we do not keep her, we may get some half-starved weaver instead, who will never pay a sou, and we shall have to let the house fall to pieces, as we did last year with that of the Mathieus—the only way to get rid of such rats."

Germain nodded sulkily, but added that he did not like Angélique. She was too bold. Maître André winked and laughed to himself. He knew that Germain was always sneaking after the girl, but what did he, the rich farmer and landlord, care? Boys would be boys, and Angélique was able to take care of herself. And thus it was that there was no one to meddle with the bright but defiant maiden of sixteen so early cast upon her own resources. She had grown up as fresh—as prickly too—as a wild rose, and she was left unmolested on her thorny stem.

The world did not like Angélique, and many people feared her. She did no actual harm, but she was reckless, and it was felt that her mood would be dangerous. She dreaded nothing and no one, and cared but for one human being—an orphan lad, a little older than herself, named Clement Lereux: a gentle, pious, and silent youth, who had always worshipped her, and towards whom she had always been tender and mild. It was natural that Clement should think kindly of his friend, and natural too that others should not share his feeling; where he saw no harm, others saw nothing else.

As a child, Angélique had been as strong and as wild as any boy, and as a girl she showed that her passions were keen, and that she did not care to lay them under control. So when any deed of mischief was perpetrated in Manneville it became a matter of course to connect her with it. Proof might fail, but Angélique was certainly at the bottom of it. It was part of her wickedness, you see, that there should be no proof against her.

Angélique seldom entered the parish church, though when she did so, she behaved herself modestly. The curé made a few attempts to tame her. She listened to him respectfully, but took no heed of his counsel. "She is a wild thing," the good man said, "a wild thing, but she will know better," a charitable sentiment which few echoed. And yet Angélique was too handsome not to inspire other feelings than those of dislike or fear. Young men like Germain might not have a good word to say for her, but they liked her beauty. The girls who were most jealous of her did their best to imitate her ways and her stately carriage. The matrons who shook their heads over her, also said it was a pity. Old men shrugged their shoulders and smiled when she was mentioned, and children looked at her half in fear, half in admiration, as she passed by, so fair, so tall, so bright, so beautiful a creature, spite of her wickedness and her bad name.

Clement was a weaver, and a hard-working one. When his day's

work was done, he went up to the rocky height on which Angélique's cottage stood, and sat there looking at the wide sea beneath him. If Angélique was at home and in the mood to please him she came and joined him for a few moments. If she did not appear he made no attempt to seek her. She had not forbidden it, but he loved her dearly, with the love of a pure, proud nature, and her fair name was too precious in his eyes to be risked lightly. And for once a lover proved a girl's safeguard. No one could suspect Clement; and since he was there to worship as well as to watch, no one could venture to say a word, so far as love and lovers went, against naughty Angélique.

The day had been dark and sultry, and the evening sun sank red and sullen in a green and heavy-looking sea, when Clement went up as usual to his post, and as usual sat waiting patiently. He knew that Angélique was within, for her window was half open, and through it he had caught a glimpse of her moving to and fro, but he knew too that she was not in the right mood for him, for giving him a careless nod she had closed the window in his face. At the end of half an hour her door opened, and Angélique came out; she ignored Clement, and turning her back to him and to the sea she swiftly went down the path leading to the village and the valley. Clement did not attempt to follow her; he did not even turn round to follow her light retreating figure with his wistful eyes; but he let time pass on, and sat looking at the red horizon that turned paler and paler as he looked, then at a faint star seeming to come forth from the darkness of the sky till it settled in a clear open spot, in calm and steady beauty.

"Now what are you doing here?" asked a young impatient voice, which he knew well, and always loved to hear, whatever its tones might be. Clement looked up and saw Angélique standing by him. She looked displeased and there was a frown on her handsome face.

"I am looking at the sea!" he composedly answered.

"I have come to tell you that this must end," she continued, without heeding his answer, and speaking in a clear, cold voice. "It can never be, Clement."

Although she did not choose to speak more plainly, Clement no doubt understood her meaning, for his reply was a quiet:

"Why so?"

"Why so! you poor simple Clement; because I should be the ruin of you," answered Angélique, speaking in an altered tone, as she sat down on a stone facing him, and looked straight in his face with her saucy blue eyes, which just then had a very tender gleam in them. "I have liked you all my life, Clement, for you have been true to me, ay, true as a brother; I like you better than I shall ever like anyone else in this world, and surely you know it; but I will never marry you. You see you are good and I am wicked ——"

"You are not," he interrupted, with a grave smile.

"I am," she persisted, "though you would never believe it. I am fond of you, indeed; but then you are fonder of me than I am of you, and so I would make you bad like myself, and you could not make me good as you are, and it would break your heart, and so you see I can never be your wife."

"Whose wife then will you be?" asked Clement, composedly.

Angélique impatiently shook her fair handsome head.

"How should I know? Is there not plenty of time to think of it?" she replied. "But not yours, Clement—never yours. Come up here to look at the sea as much as ever you please, but do not come up for *that!*"

She laughed, and her cheek had lost none of its rich bloom as she spoke. But sternness had gathered over Clement's pale face, his dark eyebrows were knit, and the whole meaning of his calm, thoughtful countenance, altered as he spoke.

"You shall be no man's wife save mine whilst I live," he said, rising.

"What?" cried Angélique.

"I say that whilst I live you shall be no man's wife save mine," he deliberately repeated. And without giving her a look, he went down the path, leaving Angélique sitting there amazed, angry, and confounded, at this sudden rebellion of her life-long slave.

"How dare he!" she cried, starting up to her feet, and clenching her hands in impotent wrath. "I might not have done it just yet, for his sake, but now I will—I will, and he shall see it—no man's wife save his!—he shall see it, and let him come up here in the evening—not a word—not a look—not a sign shall he ever again get from me—not one—not one."

But Clement, who belonged to the cool and imperturbable order of Norman peasants, was not so easily scared away as Angélique thought he would be. He had looked upon her as his ever since he was a boy, and he stubbornly held her his still now that he was a man. He considered his right over her clear, and not to be disputed even by Angélique herself, and so he came up to the cliff the very next evening, and though she refused to appear, he came on the evening that followed. Day after day, week after week, even when the rainy season set in, he came. In vain she kept aloof or gave him neither word nor sign. When she happened to pass him by, Clement came and sat on the broad flat stone, and sedately smoked his pipe whilst he looked at the sea.

They exchanged speech at last, but not on the cliff. On a clear, wintry night, with the cold moon shining down upon the main street of Manneville, and all the gable-ends of the little houses lit up in silvery lines on the background of sky, Clement saw her coming towards him, with a short, heavily-built young man walking by her side. They parted, however, before they reached the spot where he stood waiting, and when Angélique came and passed by him, she was

alone. That she saw and knew him he felt sure, but she went on and gave no token of recognition. Clement followed and soon overtook her. "Angélique," he said, emphatically, "that was Germain."

"Yes," composedly answered the girl, "his name is Germain."

"When he saw me, he walked away and left you," resumed Clement.

Angélique turned upon him with a half-scornful, half-good-humoured look.

"Was it because Germain saw you that he left me?" she asked. "Clement, I like you—but you have odd fancies."

"You mean that because I have never been a brawler and a fighter, men need not fear me!" he said; "but I am a man, Angélique, and Germain is a coward."

Angélique quickened her step as if she scorned to reply, but Clement quickened his too. They were in a lonely part of the street now; there were no houses near them, only little gardens stretching on either side.

"No one can hear us here," said Clement. "Angélique, Germain tells you that he will marry you next spring when his mourning for his father is out; it is not true. His banns will be published to-morrow week in the church of Manneville."

She stood and stared at him.

"His banns! And with whom?" asked she.

"With his cousin, Geneviève of Fontaine."

"Bah! it is not true," she said at last. "You would not deceive me, Clement, but you are deceived. He dare not do that to *me*," she added in a low tone—low, but full of wrath.

"A coward will do anything to a woman who has no man to protect her," answered Clement, quietly.

"But he knows me," said Angélique. "He knows I would set fire to all he has if he played me false."

"He is insured," said Clement, coolly.

"But how can you know it?" she asked, turning on him suddenly.

"I told you that you should never be any other man's wife than mine whilst I lived, and when I saw that he was after you, and that you let him be, I watched him. He went to Fontaine, so did I. He went to see his cousin Geneviève, I went to see her uncle Simon, my father's old friend, and so I knew of the courtship, though it was kept quiet, and when I also knew about the banns, I thought it time to tell you."

Angélique walked on in silence, and Clement followed her and did not speak. She went up the stony path that led to her cottage, and though she never looked back, Clement followed in her steps as if he had been her very shadow. Instead of entering her house, Angélique sat down in the moonlight and buried her face in her hands, and Clement sat on the stone facing her, and looked at the broad white sea, and waited.

At length Angélique raised her face, on which large bright tears were shining.

"They are not for me, nor for his treachery and his baseness," she said, in a broken voice. "I do not cry so easily. They are for you, poor Clement—poor Clement," she added, pitifully, "for I am going to marry you."

Clement said not a word. Had he not always known that it would come to this, and that Angélique would marry him?

"I always liked you," she said, "but I would not ruin you. I never liked him in that way; besides, he could take care of himself. I did not want him or his money, but I wanted to set my foot on the neck of Manneville, that never had a good word to say for me. And all the time he was abetting my enemies, plotting with them to bring scorn on me. The traitor, the traitor!" she added, her wrath rising. "Shall I tell you why he has done this, Clement? I kept him at arm's length, and he wanted his revenge. Well, I shall have mine," she pursued, shaking her bright, defiant head. "I shall have mine, and be beforehand with him," said she, laughing, "for, Clement, you will have our banns read out in church to-morrow, Sunday."

Clement nodded, and said, "Very well."

"And yet," she added, in a tone of tender pity, "I will give you the night to think over it, poor Clement; for you are alone in this world; there is not a soul to warn or advise you, no one to say, 'Do not marry that wicked Angélique' ——"

"You are not wicked," he interrupted.

"I am, Clement. There is a devil in me that loves wickedness, just as you have in you a good angel that loves goodness. I do not say I am all bad, but—but I may try you more than you think or suspect."

Even in that imperfect light she could see the face of Clement darkening as she spoke.

"Angélique," he said, a little sternly, "I am not a jealous man, but my wife must be mine. She must not let other men look at her more than is seemly, or the good angel that you speak of would certainly leave me, and that devil you speak of too, come in his stead."

"Hush!" she cried with sudden anguish. "I never meant that, Clement, never! I will be true to you in life and in death."

"Then never mind about anything else," said he once more, quite composed.

"But I do mind. I shall be true to you. Yes, but I will not alter. Do not expect me to go to mass or vespers with you. I may do so, but only when I please. Remember, I say, I give you fair warning I will not take to your ways, but you may take to mine; and, I say it again, I am wicked, though you would never believe it."

"The curé is not in bed yet, for I saw the light shining in his window as we passed by; I shall speak to him at once," answered Clement, stubbornly.

Was it the great, faithful love in the young man's heart that moved Angélique; was it some sudden impulse of tenderness stirring in her own obdurate bosom that made her throw her arms around his neck, and, giving him that kiss which she had never granted to his rival, say softly, "Good-night, Clement," then vanish so swift and light that he had not a word to say before she was gone?

Monsieur Olivier was then curé of Manneville. He had been so forty years. He had christened all his parishioners save the elder ones. He had taught them their catechism, made them make their first communion, married them, buried them too, alas! and in more senses than one been as a father to them. His tenderness for these children of his, his indulgence for their errors, his charity for their distress when they fell into poverty or trouble, were unbounded. It was but natural that a filial feeling towards so kind a pastor should exist in the hearts of the people of Manneville. Even the reprobates loved and respected the curé, and the good approached him with that tender confidence which never exists save where much love has been received as well as given.

With a happy heart, but without fear, Clement now made his way back to Monsieur Olivier's house.

The curé was correcting the last sentence in his sermon when Clement walked into his little sitting-room, and in a quiet deliberate voice declared his errand. The priest dropped his pen, which made a great blot of ink on his walnut-wood table, and raised his mild blue eyes in grave surprise to Clement's face.

"My boy," he said, "have you thought over this well? You so pious and steady, and she so wild—poor child—so wild!"

"All that will alter when we are married," said Clement, with a confident smile.

"I trust so," replied the curé, hesitatingly. "I trust so, and that it is not you who will follow your wife's ways, but your wife who will follow yours."

There was a gentle warning in the curé's voice, but Clement no more heeded it than he had heeded Angélique's words on the cliff.

"Her ways are not bad ways," he said, stoutly; "but people will find fault with her whatever she does. I have known and watched her since she was a child, and I never saw any harm in her."

"She never enters God's house," said Monsieur Olivier with a sigh.

"The dear girl has never known better," answered Clement. "When she does, she will alter."

"God grant it, Clement."

The next day was Sunday, and Angélique appeared at high mass, plainly dressed, for she was not rich, but so radiantly handsome that many a look involuntarily wandered towards the bench on

which she sat. Clement too was there, and Germain, and indeed all Manneville, for it is a church-going little place, and Angélique was one of the few persons whose appearance at mass would excite surprise. But it was not surprise, it was amazement that seized on the whole congregation when the curé, settling his spectacles, read out aloud the banns of marriage between Clement and Angélique. Everyone stared at everybody else, then all the looks rapidly converged on the girl and her lover. Angélique blushed modestly, and Clement gazed straight before him with a proud and happy look; but Germain turned sullen and seemed in a stupid dream: till, high mass being over, Clement met Angélique in the porch, and there took her arm and did what all Manneville does on every fine Sunday morning after mass; that is to say, went down to the beach, and, walking up and down, looked at the sea.

The lovers were the object of universal attention. Germain, however, was not among the lookers-on. He and Angélique had exchanged a look as she took her future husband's arm, and that look of mocking triumph of hers had pierced him through and through. It was one thing to jilt Angélique, and another thing to be jilted by her; one thing to leave her to mortification and solitude, and another to see her become the wife of Clement.

The courtship of Clement was quiet and uneventful. The lovers daily met on the cliff, and there, walking up and down side by side and looking at the wintry sea below them, they settled the little there was to settle in their future life. Clement trusted almost all to Angélique. He knew that in spite of her wild ways, she had plenty of sense, and he felt that if left to her own devices, she would know how to manage and make things comfortable. And Angélique was very good just then. She went every Sunday to high mass and vespers with Clement, and looked calmly indifferent when the banns of Germain and his cousin were read. She had been beforehand with him; that was all she cared for. And so time slipped on, and Clement and Angélique were married on a bright cold morning, and went and lived in his house at the end of the main street. As to that house which Angélique left, Germain, finding no tenant for it, had it unroofed and let it go to ruin rather than keep it in repair.

The wish of Clement's life was fulfilled at last. The girl he had loved since he could remember, was his wife. A pleasant, good-tempered, thrifty wife she made him, singing like a bird whilst he sat at his loom, and delighting his heart by going to church with him Sunday after Sunday. This lasted seven weeks, but when the eighth Sunday came round, Angélique unexpectedly declared to her husband:

"I cannot go with you, Clement."

"You are not unwell?" he asked hastily.

"Oh dear, no; but it is too dull. I tried to like it to please you, but I cannot. You must go to mass without me."

Clement tried to persuade, then to coax his wife into a change of purpose, but Angélique was obdurate.

"I told you it would be so," she said, coolly, "that I could not take to your ways. I am sorry to grieve you, my poor Clement, but I cannot help it; and you know I gave you fair warning."

Clement was too upright to say a word against this. Yes, he had been warned by Angélique herself, and he must abide by the lot he had chosen. He went to mass alone, but he found it hard, and the hardship grew as time passed, and Sunday after Sunday he left his wife at home and went to the little church of Manneville without her. This was the only drawback to his married happiness, which, otherwise, was great; but then, what a drawback! In his secret heart Clement always hoped that Angélique would alter, as he had so confidently assured the curê she would. To his pure and pious soul it seemed so cruel and so strange that a bar such as this should exist between him and his wife. Several times he tried to argue her into a better mood; in vain; Angélique heard him impatiently, then laughed at him, then said decisively:

"Clement, you only make me worse. I tell you it is no use. You took me such as I was, and you must be content with me. Alter I will not," she added, wilfully, "so you had better give it up."

Clement was silent, and from that day forth said not another word on the subject. Summer was over, autumn had come, and with it the fair of La Chapelle, which falls on Saint Martin's Day—namely, on the 11th of November. The morning was a rainy one, and Angélique, who was to go to the fair with her husband—he had business there—shook her head as she saw the heavy mist that had settled over the sea, and said shrewdly:

"I should only spoil my new cloak, Clement, if I went with you. Better stay at home and have a good warm supper ready for you when you come in—eh?"

Clement smiled, but spite the rain and the cloak, he would have liked his wife's company. His business at the fair would soon be over, he thought, and even if they came home late, and Angélique felt tired, could not he cook the supper? Every Frenchman is more or less of a cook, and Clement had had practice in his bachelor days. But he never opposed Angélique, so he yielded, and went to La Chapelle alone. He did not meet the man he wanted until late, and it was quite supper-time, and a black, murky night as well, when he came home and entered the kitchen parlour (the "salle," as it is called in Manneville) of his little house.

Bright, warm, and homely looked the salle as Clement raised the latch and walked in. The copper warming-pan, and the pewter utensils on the walls, which had been the pride of his late mother's heart, shone in the light of the bright wood fire that crackled in the deep, old-fashioned chimney. A most savoury smell came from the earthen marmite which hung from the pot-hook, and Angélique,

flushed and smiling, looked as handsome a young wife as ever rose to greet her husband after half-a-day's parting.

"God bless you, my dear heart," said Clement, giving her a hearty kiss.

"And did I not do well to stay at home?" she asked, helping him to take off his damp blouse, and deftly throwing another dry one over his neck and shoulders.

"Yes, but the day was a long one without you."

"Sit down and eat," was his wife's reply; and taking the ladle, she filled his deep plate with soup and put it down before him. "Did you see the commissioner from Rouen?" she asked, sitting down to her own meal as she spoke.

"I did. It is all settled. I am to have weaving enough for the whole winter."

Angélique looked glad, and her husband resumed, as he drew forth a tattered old pocket-book, all loose and torn, and pushed it towards her: "I found that, too, on my way home."

"You found a treasure!" mockingly said his wife.

She opened it with a look of contempt, which changed into one of startled surprise as a little bundle of bank-notes fell out on the table.

"Money!" she cried. "Look, Clement; one—three—five notes of one hundred francs each! You have found a treasure, after all! We are rich, rich, Clement!"

Her eyes sparkled—her cheeks were flushed; but Clement did not seem to understand.

"Money?" he repeated, "what money? whose money?"

"Ours; look!" and she fluttered the bank-notes in his face. She was strangely excited. That devil of covetousness who tempts so many of us, high and low, was tempting Clement's wife in that hour.

"Let me see that money," he said.

She handed him the notes at once, and uttered a triumphant: "Well, was I right?" as he examined them.

"Yes; five notes of one hundred francs each," he said slowly; "five hundred francs, as you say. But, Angélique, we are no richer than we were this morning, for we must return that money to its owner." And he deliberately put the notes back in the pocket-book as he spoke.

"Return it!" she cried, angrily. "Why, it is yours! Did you not find it? It is yours, I say. Do you not understand?"

"If you had lost your gold earrings, and that Mathurine, who thinks them so handsome, had found them, would they be hers?" asked Clement.

Angélique frowned, for she felt the strength of the argument; but she could not help retorting:

"Never say you wish to please me. How many things would not that money have got which cannot be got without it; but—do as you please." And she eat her cold soup with a sullen look.

Clement sighed, but he was too strictly honest to hesitate. He looked over the book to find out to whom it belonged, then striking his fist on the table till the cider jug and glasses rang: "Angélique," he exclaimed, "the money is Germain's. He was at the fair to-day, and the money is his."

"And you will return it," she asked, turning very pale: "return it to the coward who did his best to wrong and insult me!"

"Why not?" he answered, sternly. "You know I dislike the man as much as one Christian can dislike another; but the money is his, and I will return it."

"Never, never!" she cried; and, with the spring of a wild thing, she was by his side, snatched the pocket-book out of his hand, then passing swiftly to the other side of the table, faced him with wild defiance in her eyes.

Clement rose; then there was a pause, during which he and his wife stood looking at one another as they had never looked before.

"Give me back that book," he said, quietly. "I can take it by force, you know, but I had rather not."

"And you had better not," said Angélique, in a low tone. "You had better not, if you care for me, Clement. I tell you that if you give that money back to Germain, all is over between us. I will leave you and go from you, and you will never find me, long as you and I may live."

"If you went to the world's end I should find you," cried Clement, in a voice of mingled wrath and tenderness. "Ay, and bring you back, too. You are my wife, and I will never give you up, Angélique, never, never!"

"Oh, I know," she laughed, "you can send the gendarmes after me, and they will bring me back here. But can gendarmes make me stay?—Can they make me like and love you, Clement? No, no," she said, triumphantly, "I have you there; and remember that I can hate well—remember it!"

He looked at her with a heart full of trouble. Was this the fond wife who half an hour ago had come to meet him with open arms and smiling eyes?

"Angélique," he cried, in a voice of great anguish, "you cannot mean that I must turn thief to keep my wife's love?"

"I warned you," stubbornly said Angélique, "that you would never make me like yourself, but that I might make you like me. I gave you fair warning; you must abide by it now."

"Angélique, do not tempt me."

But Angélique only smiled and shook her bright head. He was yielding.

"Do not," he said again.

Again she shook her head at him and laughed; but in a moment, before she was aware of it, he was by her side, his strong arms were around her, and the book was in his strong right hand.

"And you think to prevail over me so," she cried, shaking herself free from him and springing to the door. "You think that I will let that traitor have his money back and spend it on his Geneviève?"

"And do *you* think I would let you have one sou of Germain's money!" cried Clement, with flashing eyes. "I would rather never see your face again than see you wear a cotton kerchief bought out of that five hundred francs!"

He had touched a chord in his wife's heart at last. The wrath passed from her handsome face. "Let us do this," she said, impetuously. "Throw that book into the fire, so that he has not the money; what do I care for it?"

"No, I cannot do that."

"Then good-bye to you. You know the cost of your fancy?"

She stood by the door with her hand on the latch, as if ready to fly out into the dark night away from him for ever and ever. He looked at her, but there was no relenting in her eyes. Germain's money was the price he must pay for her love. Standing thus, gazing into his face with smiling defiance, she looked like a beautiful but evil angel who had only come across his life to tempt him down into the depths of sin.

"Germain is rich; he does not want that money," thought Clement, "and I want my wife; she is all I have—I want my wife."

"Be it so," he said aloud; and, without taking time to think, he flung the book into the fire. He looked at it as the flames consumed it greedily, and he vaguely felt that in those flames the honour and the pride of his life were burning too.

Early the next morning old Baptiste, the drummer, went all over Manneville beating his drum, followed by a troop of boys, and every now and then pausing to proclaim, in his cracked and feeble voice, that Maître Germain Grandsire had lost a pocket-book last night, and would give a handsome reward to the individual who had found and would restore the said pocket-book with the five hundred francs that were in it. As if to render Angélique's revenge on her enemy more complete, the very first place where Baptiste stopped to make his proclamation was opposite her door. A bright morning had followed the murky night, and she stood on the threshold radiant as the sunshine that poured upon her. With a lurking smile on her rosy lips, she turned into the house and found her husband, who, pale as death, had stood listening behind her. She gave him a look of some scorn, and began to sing, in a voice as clear as a lark's, whilst he went back to his loom, which he had left to hear Baptiste's news.

"He is not working," thought Angélique, listening in vain for the click of the loom in one of the pauses of her song.

True, Clement was not working. He was thinking that there is a terrible attribute in sin: it is irreparable "It is like death," thought Clement, in his quiet silent way. "It is done and it cannot be undone. I should work years before I could save five hundred francs. I can

never do it—never. I must live and die with that sin upon me. I can never atone—never atone."

Yes, man may repent, God may forgive, and the world never know the sinner's wrong, but atonement is seldom or ever within the sinner's reach. This was the thought over which Clement now brooded. Angélique read it in his face when he came out at noon. She read, too, the look he cast at the fire as he sat down to dinner: a look that seemed to ask the pitiless flames why they had been so ready to do his bidding. She wished he would speak, say something, upbraid her; she wished he would do anything but look so downcast and sit there so silent. But words had never been in Clement's way, and he now neither reproached his wife nor opened his heart to her. She guessed much indeed, and felt secret wrath at his remorse; but she never guessed how keen it was, nor how deep was his trouble, till Sunday came round. Angélique was a fond and careful wife, on this Sunday morning she laid as usual her husband's clean linen and black silk necktie on the bed in their room. She might not go to mass with Clement, but she liked to see him look his best in the church of Manneville, and she was taking down his coat to brush it, when he said to her:

"You need not, Angélique. I am not going to mass to-day."

"Are you not well?" she asked, turning round quickly.

"Quite well; but I am not going to mass."

"Why so?"

"I have no business in the church," he said, gloomily, and he left the room as he spoke, and went down to the little patch of garden behind the house. His wife looked at him from the window, and saw him walking listlessly up and down, whilst the November sun was shining, and the church bells filled the air with their music.

"I knew it," she cried, flinging herself across the bed in her woe. "I told him so; I have ruined him, and he is a lost man." She felt no remorse, and no shame. She would have confessed her deed to all Manneville, and laughed in Germain's face, but the evil she had wrought Clement pierced her very heart with sorrow.

A week after this there broke over Manneville such a storm as had not been known within the memory of man. Thunder filled the air with clamour, and lightning flashed across the black sky, and a wild hurricane swept over the cliffs and went out to meet the roaring waves of the sea. Clement's daily task was over, and he had taken his evening meal with his wife; a silent one, he so rarely spoke now; when he suddenly rose and said:

"I must go and give it a look." He walked out as he spoke without answering, without hearing perhaps, Angélique's rejoinder:

"Wait for me, Clement."

"He would have heard me formerly," thought she, in bitter mortification, but she did not follow him, till the stream of people going by tempted her to. Why should she stay within? She locked the

door and went out. The night was frightful, but Angélique was fearless and sure of foot. Spite the fury of the wind, she made her way to the beach, and was soon one of the crowd that had gathered there to see what could be seen of the tempest that now raged all along the shore. What a night it was! Darkness above, a gleam of white foam below, fiery streaks of light, a pealing of thunder, an incessant roaring of the great waves. What was man in such a turmoil of the elements as this? Angélique was filled with awe; she would have liked to feel her husband near her; but she looked in vain for him. Other faces she saw whenever the lightning flashed, but not his. "Why should I wait and look for one who does not want me?" thought Clement's wife, angrily; and she was turning homewards when the voices of a group of men caught her ear in a lull of the storm and compelled her to stand and listen. What mad, wild tale were they telling?

The strange guest at the inn was sending off a messenger with a telegram to Saint Dizier when the storm began. The messenger at once refused to go. He could not cross the cliffs on such a night. The gentleman threatened, coaxed, bribed, in vain. The matter was one of life and death to him, he said.

"Yes," answered the man, "and so it was to him life and death."

Then the stranger came amongst the people on the beach, and asked what brave fellow would do his errand for a good round sum of money.

"How much will you give?" asked a voice from the crowd. "It was Jean's, you know," said the speaker.

"No, it was not Jean's; it was Mathieu's," said other voices.

"How much do you want?"

"Five hundred francs."

The stranger demurred, then yielded. The bargain was struck, the man went. "And Clement will never reach Saint Dizier, and never give in the telegram, and never come back," said the last speaker. "For you are all wrong, it was Clement, and not Mathieu."

"Never—never," cried Angélique, sinking down on the hard shingle, and tearing her fair hair. "Never—never."

Fated words that came but too true. In vain did Clement give his young life to earn the money that should redeem his sin. The story of that cruel night was never rightly known, but what there was none to tell, everyone could easily surmise. When, with the first streak of light, Angélique found her husband in that hollow of the cliff against which the fury of the hurricane had dashed him, almost as soon as he had attempted to cross the downs, he was dying, and all he could or would say was, "Do not move me," and "send for the curé."

"He is here," she answered, for she had not come alone.

As soon as the wrath of the night had subsided, all the men of

Manneville, with the maire and the curé at their head, had turned out to look for Clement.

"Here I am, my poor fellow," said the curé, coming forward.

Clement moaned, then looked at his wife as much as to say, "Tell him."

"Stand back all of you," said she, almost fiercely as she motioned the crowd away with an imperious gesture of her hand; "And you, Monsieur le Curé," she added in a low tone, "come nearer and listen, and I will tell you Clement's confession."

It was a strange and awful scene. No trace of wrath in the clear morning sky: Nature seeming to waken to sweetness and light, as after the calmest of slumbers: a dying man looking his last at this lovely world, and on her knees by him a sinning woman telling a mild, white-haired priest the story of the wrong-doing that was costing life to one and to the other bitter remorse and life-long tears.

"He did it, but I made him do it," said Angelique, when the tale was told. "And now, Clement, hear me. You know me, and that to what I say I keep. You may die in peace. The money shall be repaid. I tell you it shall be," she added, in a voice of subdued passion and energy. "And yet no one shall ever know. Though I work till I am old and grey, it shall be paid back, and no one save the curé here shall ever know—shall ever know; and, Clement, I know you would like to meet me in the next world. Well then, so help me Heaven, I will do my best to live here so as to meet you there."

Her cheeks were flushed, her dry eyes burned like fire as she raised her hand to Heaven in solemn protest. A faint smile passed over the pallid face of the dying man. Tears were flowing down the cheeks of the priest, his dealings had been with small sins and common sinners. Never with anything so tragic as this story of Clement and his wife.

"That will do, child," said he, motioning her away. "You must leave me with your husband."

She moved away out of hearing and knelt on the hard stones with her eyes fixed on Clement's face. The curé was bending towards him, uttering a few whispered words of comfort. "You repent your sin, do you not? Yes, poor fellow—poor fellow. Well, then, do not despair. Think of Christ on the cross; think of the penitent thief whose life of crime was effaced in one moment, and hope for mercy."

Clement could not speak, but the look of his sunken eyes assented to every word. The priest raised his hand, and in the name of Heaven absolved the penitent sinner, and even as the solemn words were uttered, that poor sinner's soul passed away.

Thus ended the brief story of Angélique's wedded life and Clement's ill-fated love. And no one knew, no one suspected, how and why Clement had allowed five hundred francs to tempt him to almost certain death. People wondered, indeed, but after a time they forgot to think it so strange: and Angélique, whom no one would dream

of questioning, was left to her sorrow and her widowhood. She bore both in stoic silence, asking comfort or counsel from none. She sold off all that her husband had left, also what belonged to herself, and when her home was bare she made up a little bundle and turned her back upon Manneville. At once unkind tongues were busy at Angélique's expense. They knew what it was. She had coveted a gold watch and chain, and it was to get them for her that poor Clement had given his life, and now she had gone away from Manneville to trade in her beauty and get some other husband in another place, where her wickedness was less known. For once, Monsieur Olivier, the curé, so gentle and so mild, got really angry. He silenced the scandal-mongers individually, as well as he could, and preached a vigorous sermon against scandal in general, for the benefit of all. He knew whither Angélique was gone and with what purpose, and though he could explain nothing, his kind heart would not let her be wronged undefended. "The poor child has no one to stand by her now," he said; "her husband is dead, she is away, and how dare any of you try and take her good name from her." No more was said within his hearing, but Manneville thought none the better of poor Angélique.

She had been gone a month, when to his surprise the curé met her one morning at the churchyard gate carrying her bundle in her hand.

"Why, Angélique," said he, kindly, "have you come back to us?"

Angélique shook her head.

"I only came back to see his grave. I did not like where I was. I did not earn money fast enough," she added, sadly. "My Clement must not wait too long."

"Then stay with us in Manneville, Angélique."

"Live in the same place with Germain Grandsire?" she cried, her blue eyes flashing. "Never. *He* drove me wild, and I drove *him* to do it and to die."

"Child," said Monsieur Olivier, gently, "you must forgive Germain. The hand of God has been heavy upon him since you left us. His wife has gone raving mad: he dare not put her in an asylum, lest her friends should take her away and claim all her money back. She was rich, you know, and no one can he find who will stay and mind her in his own house. Can you not forgive him now?" added the curé, gently.

But Angélique did not seem to heed him. Her face lit with sudden hope.

"Mad! he sent her mad," she cried. "I know he did. Monsieur le Curé, I will take care of his mad wife, and he shall pay me well to do it."

"You, Angélique? but ——"

"I am afraid of nothing," she broke in, with her dauntless look. "I will do it."

She went swiftly down the path before the curé could utter another word. In a few minutes she had reached Germain Grandsire's great, old farm, and made her way to his presence. She found him in the low, dark salle, standing by a dingy secrétaire on which money was spread. He turned round sharply as she came in.

"Why, who are you?" he began, "and—what?" Then he paused, and stared at her.

"I am Angélique," said she; "and I know what you want," she added, by way of greeting. "I come to do it for you?"

"You!"

"Yes," she resumed, "why not? I am strong, and I think you know that I am fearless. I will take care of her, and you need not send her out of the house and let her friends have her back again. Of course you want to keep your rich wife, Germain," said Angélique, with a smile. "Well, I will do it; only you must pay me well for it—very well indeed. If she dies to-morrow, you must give me—let me see," she added, seeming to meditate, "we will say six hundred francs, and if she lives a year you need give me no more—you understand?"

Yes, Germain did understand, and he stared in mingled doubt and amazement at the beautiful woman whom he had once liked after a fashion of his own.

"Six hundred francs is too much," said he at length. "Besides ——"

A fearful shriek, which rang through the whole house, interrupted him. Angélique smiled.

"Too much," she said. "You think it too much, and you can find no one to do it for love or money."

He tried to bargain, but Angélique only walked to the door.

"Have it then," he grumbled. "Yet it is too much; for suppose, as you say, she dies to-morrow."

But he yielded, and took her at once to the darkened room where Geneviève, bound hand and foot, now spent her days.

"Take care," he cried, as he opened the door and stepped back hastily. "She has got loose."

Angélique looked round at him in quiet scorn, walked into the room alone and shut the door behind her. The place was dark, but a ray of light slipped in through the shutters and showed her Germain's wife standing free from her bonds with wild looks and dishevelled hair.

Angélique threw the window open and gazed steadily at the mad woman, who scowled in return.

"Geneviève, I am strong," she said, "and I am not afraid, and I will be kind to you; but"—she raised her finger—"you must obey me."

That fearless look, that low, even voice quelled Geneviève's rage in a moment. She began to moan and weep.

"I will be kind to you," said Angélique again. "And now sit down and let me comb your hair."

Geneviève obeyed in stupid silence, and the power thus acquired in that first moment Angélique lost no more. She ruled Geneviève like a child; cure her she could not, but master her she did. Only at what cost did she do so? Geneviève would sit in a dark room, and Angélique had to sit with her there. She moaned all day long, talking of hidden enemies who sought her life, and Angélique had to sit and listen. She spent sleepless nights, and Angélique had to watch her through them. On Sunday mornings, indeed, she bound her firmly, and left her to go to early mass, for she had promised Clement that his ways should be her ways, and she kept her word. But otherwise she stayed with her always; and days and weeks and months of this terrible life wore on: till, when summer ended and autumn set in, death mercifully released the mad woman and her keeper.

The funeral was scarcely over when Angélique appeared before her master with her bundle in her hand.

"Maître Germain," she said, "your wife is dead. I did my duty by her. Will you pay me my wages, six hundred francs."

Germain's face fell.

"Six hundred francs, and the year is not out," said he. "Angélique, it is too much. You see I have had losses. I lost five hundred francs last Saint Martin's day, and that money was to bring me in twenty, fifty per cent., and I lost it! And my wife's illness cost me a world of money, and now you want six hundred francs."

"Deny me that money if you dare," said Angélique, with a flash in her blue eyes.

And he did not dare to deny it. He fumbled at his pocket-book and brought out six notes of a hundred francs each, and placed them sullenly before her. She looked at the money like one in a dream, but did not attempt to touch it.

"I think I will not take it," she said. "I might lose or spend it; better leave it to you, Germain. You will turn it to use, and—yes, I will leave it to you."

"But you are not giving it to me," said Germain, staring. "You will claim it from me some day."

"Ay, some day," she answered, with a short laugh, "we will settle our accounts, do not fear; we will on the great day of all, if on no other. In the meanwhile keep the money and use it. I know what I am doing."

"Well, as you say, it will be safer with me," he muttered, putting the notes back in his pocket-book, and looking at her stealthily as he spoke. She had grown thin, but there was a flush on her cheeks and a light in her eyes, and she had never been more beautiful and stately than she was now.

"Why do you go?" he asked.

"Why should I stay?"

"Why do you go?" he persisted. "We might marry now, you know," he added, slowly; "after a while, of course."

Angélique laughed in his face. "The last words I spoke to my Clement were that I should so behave in this world that I hoped we should meet in the next," she answered, in her old defiant way. "Do you think it is as *your* wife my Clement would like to meet me there! Besides, take my advice, you were not over kind to poor Geneviève; be in no hurry to look for another wife. And now good-bye and good luck to you, Maître Germain Grandsire."

With a cool nod she left him. He stared after her moodily. "She is handsomer than ever, the beggarly beauty," he muttered; "yet I am glad she said no; she is only a beggar, after all." On leaving the farm Angélique went up the main street to the curé's house. The curé was out, said the servant.

"Bid him good-bye for me," said Angélique. "I am leaving Manneville."

She went on her way and climbed up the Cliff, where Clement and she had so often met. She sat on the broad, flat stone where he used to sit, and thence she saw in the mellow light of the setting sun the ruins of her old home; the sea which Clement and she had looked at together; the hollow of the cliff where the fierce hurricane had dashed him, and on the other side of the valley the little churchyard where he lay.

There are hours and moods in which we all go over our old life, be the retrospect brief or long, and such an hour was this to Angélique. A pause, a resting-place between the future and the past, in which thought, like a weary bird of passage, folded its drooping wings awhile and let the present go by. For what the future might yet be, she cared nothing; it mattered so little what became of her now: but, oh! how dark, and drear, and tragic had been the past—that past, of which her own hands had woven warp and woof! could she ever forget it? could she ever put it by like a thing that we would look at no more? Ah! surely never—never.

The sound of a step roused her from her dark dream.

"I guessed you were here," said a voice behind her.

She looked up and rose slowly to face the curé, who came up all breathless with his rapid ascent.

"Yes," she answered, looking at him dreamily. "I came and told him."

"Child," he remonstrated, gently.

"I came and told him," she pursued, with tears in her eyes and a smile on her lips as life seemed to come back to her sad young face. "I think the dead hear us, Monsieur le Curé. I am sure my Clement hears me, I talk to him so often and he seems to answer. And I am glad now, for a while ago I felt as if he were happy; it was like a little whisper, but I felt it. Yes, I am sure he is glad, and so as it is all over, I can go away for good. And good-bye to you, Monsieur le Curé, and God's blessing be on you for all your kindness."

Her voice was gentle and low; this was scarcely like the Angélique of old times, but the priest knew that nature is strong, and he would have liked to keep the wayward girl under his wing. He tried to persuade her to stay, but Angélique was Angélique still, she had a will of her own and was obdurate. "But money," argued Monsieur Olivier, "have you got money enough? I know that Germain paid you well, but I can guess how you disposed of the money, poor child. Have you any of it left?"

"Not a sou of it would I keep," said she, with the old flash in her eyes. "I left it all to him—all, and he rejoiced in it; and, as I told him, we will settle accounts on the great judgment day, and let him accuse my Clement then if he dare! No, my husband gave his blood and I gave the gold, and we are quits. Keep any of his money! Did not my Clement once tell me he would rather never see my face again than that I should wear a cotton kerchief bought with it; but I have this," said she, taking a gold piece from the bosom of her dress, where she wore it sewed up in a piece of cloth like a locket. "It remained to me after I sold his things, and it will do. There will be a blessing in it, Monsieur le Curé, as there was a curse in that other money and would ever have been. Here I cannot stay," she continued, more calmly. "My task is done. The place would kill me; worse, it might make me wicked again. I am young and strong; I must fight my way through the world. It will tame me," she added, "for I am still a bit wild, Monsieur le Curé."

"Yes, but you have been a good child. God bless you."

He gently laid his hand on her head; she took his other hand, raised it to her lips, and said softly:

"You will pray for me, will you not?"

"Ay, child. Well, God be with you since you will go. Perhaps it is best," he thought, looking at her as she stood before him in all the pride and strength of her gentle and grand beauty, a creature sorely chastised, but not yet conquered. "Only, where are you going?"

Perhaps Angélique did not know this herself: perhaps, with her old wilfulness, she did not care to answer the question.

"Who knows!" said she, with a half wistful look. "The world is wide, and there are many roads that lead from Manneville. Only one thing you may be sure of—no road that would part me from him will I ever take."

These were her last words.

She took up her bundle, and, with one sad look around her, she walked down the path that led to the sea. He stood and watched her. She shunned the village and entered the lane that lies at the back of the houses. The sun had long left it. It was shadowy and dim, and in the dimness and the shadow, the figure of Angélique slowly vanished, and thus passed away for ever from Manneville.

LEE, THE LETTER-MAN.

IN a side lane of Timberdale, just off the churchyard, was the cottage of Jael Batty, whose name you have heard before. Side by side with it stood another cottage, inhabited by Lee, the assistant letter-carrier; or, as Timberdale generally called him, the letter-man. These cottages had a lively look-out, the farrier's shop and a few thatched hayricks opposite; sideways, the tombstones in the graveyard.

Some men are lucky in life, others are unlucky. Andrew Lee was in the latter category. He had begun life as a promising farmer, but came down in the world. First of all, he had to pay a heap of money for some man who had persuaded him to become his security, and that stripped him of his means. Afterwards a series of ill-fortune set in on the farm: crops failed, cattle died, and Lee was sold-up. Since then he had tried at this, and tried at that; been in turn a farmer's labourer, an agent for coal, and the proprietor of a shop devoted to the benefit of the younger members of the community, its speciality being bull's-eyes and besoms for birch-rods. For some few years now he had settled down in this cottage next door to Jael Batty's, and carried out the letters at fourteen shillings a week.

There were two letter-men, Spicer and Lee. But there need not have been two, only that Timberdale was so straggling a parish, the houses in it lying far and wide. Like other things in this world, fortune, even in so trifling a matter as these two postmen, was not dealt out equally. Spicer had the least work, for he took the home delivery, and had the most pay; Lee did all the country tramping, and had only the fourteen shillings. But when the place was offered to Lee he was at a very low ebb indeed, and took it thankfully, and thought he was set-up in riches for life, for, as you know, we estimate things by contrast.

Andrew Lee was not unlucky in his fortunes only. Of his three children not any had prospered. The son married all too young; within a year he and his wife were both dead, leaving a baby-boy to Lee as a legacy. The elder daughter had emigrated to the other end of the world with her husband; and the younger daughter had a history. She was pretty and good and gentle, but just a goose. Goose that she was, though, all the parish liked Mamie Lee.

About four years before the time I am telling of, there came a soldier to Timberdale, on a visit to Spicer the letter-carrier, one James West. He was related to Spicer's wife; her nephew, or cousin, or something of that; a tall, good-looking, merry-tempered dragoon with a dashing carriage and a dashing tongue; and he ran

away with the heart of Mamie Lee. That might not so much have mattered in the long-run, for such privilege is universally allowed to the sons of Mars; but he also ran away with her. One fine morning Mr. James West was missing from Timberdale, and Mamie Lee was missing also. The parish went into a rapture of indignation over it, not so much with him as with her; called her a "baggage," and hoped her folly would come home to her. Poor old Lee thought he had got his death-blow, and his hair turned suddenly grey.

Not more than twelve months had gone by when she was back again. Jael Batty was running out one evening to get a pound of sugar at Salmon's shop, when she met a young woman with a bundle staggering down the lane, and keeping under the side of the hedge as if she were afraid of falling, or else did not want to be seen. Too weak to carry the bundle, she seemed ready to sink at every step. Jael Batty, who had her curiosity like other people, though she was deaf, peered into the bent face, and brought herself up with a shriek.

"What, is it you, Mamie Lee! Well, the impudence of this! How on earth could you pick up the brass to come here?"

"Are my poor father and mother alive? Do they still live here?" faltered Mamie, turning her piteous white face to Jael.

"They be; both alive; but it's no thanks to you. If they——Oh, if I don't believe—What have you got in that ragged old shawl?"

"It's my baby," answered Mamie; and she passed on.

Andrew Lee took her in amidst sobs and tears, and thanked Heaven she was come back, and welcomed her unreasonably. The parish went on at him for it, showering down plenty of abuse, and asking whether he did not feel ashamed of himself. There was even a talk of his post as letter-carrier being taken from him, but it came to nothing. Rymer was postmaster then; and he was a man of too much sorrow himself to inflict it needlessly upon another. On the contrary, he sent down cordials and tonics and things for Mamie, who had had a fever and come home dilapidated as to strength, and never charged for them. Thomas Rymer's own heart was slowly breaking, so he could feel for her.

The best or the worst of it was, that Mamie said she was married. Which assertion was of course not believed, and only added to her sin in the eyes of Timberdale. The tale she told was this. That James West had taken her straight to some town, where he had previously had the banns put up, and married her there. The day after the marriage they had sailed for Ireland, whither he had to hasten to join his regiment, his leave of absence having expired. At the end of some seven or eight months, the regiment was ordered to India, and he departed with it, leaving her in her obscure lodging at Cork. By-and-by her baby was born; she was very ill then, very; had fever and a cough, and sundry other complications; and what with lying ill eight weeks, and being obliged to pay a doctor and a nurse

all that while, besides other expenses, she spent all the money Mr. James West left with her, and had no choice between starvation and coming back to Timberdale.

You should have heard how this account was scoffed at. The illness, and the baby, and the poverty nobody disputed—they were plain enough to be seen by all Timberdale; and what else could she expect, they'd like to know. But when she came to talk about the church (or rather, old Lee for her, second-hand, for she was not at all a person now to be spoken to by Timberdale) then their tongues were let loose in all kinds of inconvenient questions. *Which* was the town?—and which was the church in it?—and where were her "marriage lines"? Mamie could give no answer at all. She did not know the name of the town, or where it was situated. James had taken her with him in the train to it, and that was all she knew; and she did not know the name of the church or the clergyman; and as to marriage lines, she had never heard of any. So, as Timberdale said, what could you make out of this, save one thing—that Mr. Jim West had been a deep rogue, and taken her in. At best, it could have been but a factitious ceremony; perhaps in some barn, got up like a church for the occasion, said the more tolerant, willing to give excuse for pretty Mamie if they could; but the chief portion of Timberdale looked upon the whole as an out-and-out invention.

Poor Andrew Lee had never taken a hopeful view of the affair from the first; but he held to the more tolerant opinion that Mamie had been herself deceived, and he could not help being cool to Spicer in consequence. Spicer in retaliation threw all the blame upon Mamie, and held up Mr. James West as a shining paragon of virtue.

But, as the time went on, and no news, no letter, or other token arrived from West, Mamie herself gave in. That he had deceived her, she slowly became convinced of, and despair took hold of her heart. Timberdale might have the satisfaction of knowing that she judged herself just as humbly and bitterly as they judged her, and was grieving herself to a shadow. Three years had passed now since her return, and the affair was an event of the past; and Mamie wore, metaphorically, the white sheet of penitence, and hardly dared to show her face outside the cottage door.

But you may easily see how all this, besides the sorrow, told upon Lee. Fourteen shillings a-week for a man and his wife to exist upon cannot be called much, especially if they have seen better days and been used to better living. When the first grandchild, poor little orphan, arrived to be kept, he and his wife both thought it hard, though quite willing to take him; and now they had Mamie and another grandchild. This young one was named Jemima, for Mamie had called her after her faithless husband. Five people and fourteen shillings a-week, and provisions dear, and house-rent to pay, and Lee's shoes perpetually wanting to be mended! One or two

generous individuals grew rather fond of telling Lee that he would be better off in the union.

It was November weather. A cold, dark, biting, sharp, drizzly morning. Andrew Lee got up betimes, as usual: he had to be out soon after seven to be ready for his letter delivery. In the kitchen, when he entered it, he found his daughter there before him, coaxing the kettle to boil on the handful of fire, that she might make him his cup of tea and give him his breakfast. She was getting uncommonly weak and shadowy-looking now: a little woman, not much more yet than a girl, with a shawl folded about her shivering shoulders, a hacking cough, and a mild, non-resisting face. Her father had lately told her that he would not have her get up in a morning, she was not fit for it; what he wanted done he could do himself.

"Now, Mamie, why are you here? You should attend to what I say, child."

She got up from her knees and turned her sad brown eyes towards him: bright and sweet eyes once, but now dimmed with the tears and sorrow of the last three years.

"I am better up; I am indeed, father. Not sleeping much, I get tired of lying: and my cough is worse a-bed."

He sat down to his cup of tea and to the bread she placed before him. Some mornings there was a little butter, or dripping, or, mayhap, bacon fat; but this morning he had to eat his bread dry. It was getting near the end of the week, and the purse ran low. Lee had a horror of debt, and would never let his people run into it for the smallest sum if he knew it.

"It's poor fare for you this morning, father; but I'll try and get a morsel of boiled pork for dinner and we'll have it ready early. I expect to be paid to-day for the bit of work I have been doing for young Mrs. Ashton. Some of those greens down by the apple trees want cutting: they'll be nice with a bit of pork."

Lee turned his eyes in the direction of the greens and the apple trees: but the window was misty, and he could only see the drizzle of rain-drops on the panes. As he sat there, a thought came into his head that he was beginning rapidly to feel old; old, and worn, and shaky. Trouble ages a man more than work, more than time; and Lee never looked at the wan face of his daughter, and at its marks of sad repentance, but he felt anew the sting which was always pricking him more or less. What with that, and his difficulty to keep the pot boiling, and his general state of shakiness, Lee was older than his years. Timberdale had got into the habit of calling him Old Lee, you see; but he was not sixty yet. He had a nice face; when it was a young face it must have been like Mamie's. It had furrows in it now, and his scanty grey-locks hung down on each side of it.

Putting on his top-coat, which was about as thin as those remarkable sheets told of by Brian O'Linn, Lee went out buttoning it.

The rain had ceased, but the cold wind took him as he went down the narrow garden-path, and he could not help shivering.

"It's a bitter wind to-day, father; in the north-east, I think," said Mamie, standing at the door to shut it after him. "I hope there'll be no letters for Crabb."

Lee, as he pressed along in the teeth of the cruel wind, was hoping the same. Salmon the grocer, who had taken the post-office when the late Thomas Rymer gave it up, was sorting the letters in the room behind the shop when Lee went in. Spicer, a lithe, active, dark-eyed man of forty-five, stood at the end of the table waiting for his bag. Lee went and stood beside him, giving him a brief good morning: he had not taken kindly to the man since West ran away with Mamie.

"A light load this morning," remarked Mr. Salmon to Spicer, as he handed him his appropriate bag. "And here's yours, Lee," he added a minute after: "not heavy, either. Too cold for people to write, I suppose."

"Anything for Crabb, sir?"

"For Crabb? Well, yes, I think there is. For the Rector."

Upon going out, Spicer turned one way, Lee the other. Spicer's district was easy as play; Lee's was a regular country tramp, the farm-houses lying in all the four points of the compass. The longest tramp was over to us at Crabb. And why the two houses, our own and Coney's farm, should be comprised in the Timberdale delivery, instead of that of Crabb, people could not understand. It was so, however, and nobody bestirred himself to alter it. For one thing, we were not often at Crabb Cot, and the Coneys did not have many letters, so it was not like an every-day delivery: we chanced to be there just now.

The letter spoken of by Salmon, which would bring Lee to Crabb this morning, was for the Reverend Herbert Tanerton, Rector of Timberdale. He had married a niece of Mr. Coney's, and was now staying with her at the farm on a week's visit, and had given orders to Salmon that his letters, during that week, were to be delivered at the farm instead of the rectory.

Lee finally got through his work, all but this one letter, and turned his steps our way. As ill-luck had it—the poor fellow thought it so afterwards—he could not take the short and sheltered way through Crabb Ravine, for he had letters that morning for Sir Robert Tenby, at Bellwood, and also for the Stone House on the way to it. By the time he turned on the solitary road that led to Crabb, Lee was nearly blown to smithereens by the fierce north-east wind, and chilled to the marrow. All his bones ached; he felt low, frozen, ill, and wondered whether he should get over the ground without breaking down.

"I wish I might have a whiff at my pipe!"

A pipe is to many people the panacea for all earthly discomfort;

it was so to Lee. But only in the previous February had occurred that damage to Helen Whitney's letter, already told of; and Lee was afraid to risk a similar mishap again. He carried Salmon's general orders with him: not to smoke during his round. Once the letters were delivered, he might do so.

His weak grey hair blowing about, his thin and shrunken frame shivering and shaking as the blasts took him, his empty post-bag thrust into his pocket and the Rector's letter in his hand, Lee toiled along on his weary way. To a strong man the walk would have been nothing, and not much to Lee in fairer weather. It was the cold and wind that tired him. And though, after giving vent to the above wish, he held out a little while, presently he could resist the comfort no longer, but drew forth his pipe and struck a match to light it.

How it occurred he never knew, never knew to his dying day; but the flame from the match caught the letter, and set it alight. It was that thin foreign paper that catches so quickly, and the match was obstinate, and the wind blew the flame about. He pressed the fire out with his hands, but a portion of the letter was burnt.

If Timbuctoo, or some other far-away place had been within the distance of a man's legs, Lee would have made off for it straight. His pipe on the ground, the burnt letter underneath his horrified gaze, and his hair raised on end, stood he. What on earth should he do? It had been only a pleasant young lady's letter last time; now it was the stern rector's.

There was only one thing that he could do—go on with the letter to its destination. It often happens in these distressing catastrophes that the one only course open is the least palatable. His pipe hidden away in his pocket—for Lee had had enough of it for that morning—and the damaged letter humbly held out in his hand, Lee made his approach to the farm.

I chanced to be standing at its door with Tom Coney and Tod. Those two were going out shooting, and the Squire had sent me running across the road with a message to them. Lee came up, and with a face that seemed greyer than usual, and a voice from which most of its sound had departed, he told his tale.

Tom Coney gave a whistle. "Oh, by George, Lee, won't you catch it! The Rector ——"

"The Rector's a regular Martinet, you know," Tom Coney was about to add, but he was stopped by the appearance of the Rector himself.

Herbert Tanerton had chanced to be in the little oak-panelled hall and caught the drift of the tale. A frown sat on his cold face as he came forward, a frown that would have befitted an old face better than a young one.

He was not loud. He did not fly into a passion, as Helen Whitney did. He just took the unfortunate letter in his hand, and looked at it, and looked at Lee, and spoke quietly and coldly.

"This is, I believe, the second time you have burnt the letters," and Lee dared not deny it.

"And in direct defiance of orders. You are not allowed to smoke when on your rounds."

"I'll never attempt to smoke again, when on my round, as long as I live, sir, if you'll only be pleased to look over it this time," gasped Lee, holding up his hands in a piteous way. But the rector was one who went in for "duty," and the appeal found no favour with him.

"No," said he, "it would be to encourage wrong doing, Lee. Meet me at eleven o'clock at Salmon's."

"Never again, sir, as long as I live!" pleaded Lee. "I'll give you my word of that, sir; and I never broke it yet. Oh, sir, if you will but have pity upon me, and not report me!"

"At eleven o'clock," repeated Herbert Tanerton, decisively, as he turned indoors again.

"What an old stupid you must be!" cried Tod to Lee. "He won't excuse you; he is the wrong sort of parson to do it."

"And a pretty kettle of fish you've made of it!" added Tom Coney. "I'd not have minded much, if it had been my letter; but he is different, you know."

Poor Lee turned his eyes on me: perhaps remembering that he had asked me, the other time, to stand his friend with Miss Whitney. Nobody could be his friend now: when the rector took up a grievance he did not let it go again; especially if it were his own. Good-hearted Jack, his sailor-brother, would have screened Lee, though all the letters in the parish got burnt.

At eleven o'clock precisely the Reverend Herbert Tanerton entered Salmon's shop; and poor Lee, not daring to disobey his mandate, crept in after him. They had it out in the room behind. Salmon was properly severe; told Lee he was not sure but the offence involved penal servitude, and that he deserved hanging. A prosperous tradesman in his small orbit, the man was naturally inclined to be dictatorial, and was ambitious of standing well with his betters, especially the rector. Lee was suspended there and then; and Spicer was told that for a time, until other arrangements were made, he must do double duty. Spicer, vexed at this, for it would take him so much the more time from his legitimate business, that of horse doctor, told Lee he was a fool, and deserved not only hanging but drawing and quartering.

"What's up?" asked Ben Rymer, crossing the road from his own shop to accost Lee, as the latter came out of Salmon's. Ben was the chemist now, and steady; and Ben, it was said, would soon pass his examination for surgeon. He had his hands in his pockets and his white apron on, for Mr. Ben Rymer had no false pride, and would as soon show himself to Timberdale in an apron as in a dress coat.

Lee told his tale, confessing the sin of the morning. Mr. Rymer

nodded his head significantly several times as he heard it, and pushed his red hair from his capacious forehead.

"They'll not look over it this time, Lee."

"If I could but get some one to be my friend with the rector, and ask him to forgive me," said Lee. "Had your father been alive, Mr. Rymer, I think he would have done it for me."

"Very likely. No good to ask me—if that's what you are hinting at. The rector looks upon me as a black sheep and turns on me the cold shoulder. But I don't think he is one to listen, Lee, though the King came to ask him."

"What I shall do I don't know," bewailed Lee. "If the place is stopped, the pay stops, and I've not another shilling in the world or the means of earning one. My wife's ailing; and Mamie gets worse day by day; and there are the two little ones. They are all upon me."

"Some people here say, Lee, that you should have sent Mamie and her young one to the workhouse, and not have charged yourself with them."

"True, sir, several have told me that. But people don't know what a father's feelings are till they experience them. Mamie was my own child that I had dandled on my knee, and watched grow up in her pretty ways, and I was fonder of her than any earthly thing. The workhouse might not have taken her in."

"She had forfeited all claim on you. And come home only to break your heart."

"True," meekly assented Lee. "But the Lord has told us we are to forgive, not seven times, but seventy times seven. If I had turned her adrift from my door and heart, sir, who knows but I might have been driven adrift myself at the Last Day."

Evidently it was of no use talking to one so unreasonable as Lee. And Mr. Ben Rymer turned back to his shop. A customer was entering it with a prescription and a medicine bottle.

II.

One day in the Christmas week, Mrs. Todhetley despatched me to Timberdale through the snow for a box of those delectable "Household Pills" which have been mentioned before: an invention of the late Mr. Rymer's, and continued to be made up by Ben. Ben was behind the counter as usual, when I entered, and shook the snow off my boots on the door mat.

"Anything else?" he asked me, wrapping up the box.

"Not to-day. There goes old Lee! How thin he looks!"

"Starvation," said Ben, craning his long neck to look between the coloured globes at Lee on the other side the way. "Lee has nothing coming in now."

"What do they all live upon?"

"Goodness knows. Upon things that he pledges, and the vegetables in the garden. I was in there last night, and I can tell you it was a picture, Mr. Johnny Ludlow."

"A picture of what?"

"Misery: distress: hopelessness. It is several weeks now since Lee earned anything, and they have been all that while upon short commons. Some days on no commons at all, I expect."

"But what took you there?"

"I heard such an account of the girl — Mamie — yesterday afternoon; of her cough and her weakness; that I thought I'd see if any of my drugs would do her good. But it's food they all want."

"Is Mamie very ill?"

"Very ill, indeed. I'm not sure but she's dying."

"It's a dreadful thing."

"One can't ask too many professional questions—people are down upon you for that before you have passed," resumed Ben, alluding to his not being qualified. "But I sent her in a cordial or two, and I spoke to Darbyshire; so perhaps he'll look in upon her to-day."

Ben Rymer might have been a black sheep once upon a time, but he had not a bad heart. I began wondering whether Mrs. Todhetley could help them.

"Is Mamie Lee still able to do any sewing?"

"About as much as I could do it. I shall hear what Darbyshire's report is. They would certainly be better off in the workhouse."

"I wish they could be helped!"

"Not much chance of that," said Ben. "She is a sinner, and he is a sinner: Timberdale says so, you know. People in these enlightened days are so very self-righteous!"

"How is Lee a sinner?"

"How! Why, has he not burnt up the public's letters? Mr. Tanerton leads the van in banning him, and Timberdale follows."

I went home, questioning whether our folks would do anything to help the Lees. Nobody called out against ill-doings worse than the Squire; and nobody was more ready than he to lend a helping hand when the ill-doers were fainting for lack of it.

It chanced that, just about the time I was talking to Ben Rymer, Mr. Darbyshire, the doctor at Timberdale, called at Lee's. He was a little, dark man, with an irritable temper and a turned-up nose, but good as gold at heart. Mamie Lee lay back in a chair, her head on a pillow, weak and wan and weary, the tears slowly rolling down her cheeks. Darbyshire was feeling her pulse, and old Mrs. Lee pottered about, bringing sticks from the garden to feed the handful of fire. The two children sat on the brick floor.

"If it were not for leaving my poor little one, I should be glad to die, sir," she was saying. "I shall be glad to go: I hope it is not

wrong to say it. She and I have been a dreadful charge upon them here."

Darbyshire looked round the kitchen. It was nearly bare: the things had gone to the pawnbroker's. Then he looked at her.

"There's no need for you to die yet. Don't get that fallacy in your head. You'll come round fast enough with a little care."

"No, sir, I'm afraid not; I think I am past it. It has all come of the trouble, sir; and perhaps when I'm gone, the neighbours will judge me more charitably. I believed with all my heart it was a true marriage—and I hope you'll believe me when I say it, sir; it never came into my mind to imagine otherwise. And I'd have thought the whole world would have deceived me, sooner than James."

"Ah," says Darbyshire, "most girls think that. Well, I'll send you in some physic to soothe the pain in the chest. But what you most want, you see, is kitchen physic."

"Mr. Rymer has been very good in sending me cordials and cough mixture, sir. Mother's cough is bad, and he sent some to her as well."

"Ah; yes. Mrs. Lee, I am telling your daughter that what she most wants is kitchen physic. Good kitchen physic, you understand. You'd be none the worse yourself for some of it."

Dame Lee, coming in just then in her pattens, tried to put her poor bent back as upright as she could, and shook her head before answering.

"Kitchen physic don't come in our way now, Dr. Darbyshire. We just manage not to starve quite, and that's all. Perhaps, sir, things may take a turn. The Lord is over all, and He sees our need."

"He dave me some peppermint d'ops," said the little one, who had been waiting to put in her word. "Andy, too."

"Who did?" asked the doctor.

"Mr. 'Ymer."

Darbyshire patted the little straw-coloured head, and went out. An additional offence in the eyes of Timberdale was that the child's fair curls were just the pattern of those on the head of James the deceiver.

"Well, have you seen Mamie Lee?" asked Ben Rymer, who chanced to be standing at his shop door after his dinner, when Darbyshire was passing by from paying his round of visits.

"Yes, I have seen her. There's no radical disease."

"Don't you think her uncommonly ill?"

Darbyshire nodded. "But she's not too far gone to be cured. She'd get well fast enough under favourable circumstances."

"Meaning good food?"

"Meaning food and other things. Peace of mind, for instance. She is just fretting herself to death. Shame, remorse, and all that, have got hold of her: besides grieving her heart out after the fellow."

"Her voice is so hollow! Did you notice it?"

"Hollow from weakness only. As to her being too far gone, she is not at present: at least, that's my opinion; but how soon she may become so I can't say. With good kitchen physic, as I've just told them, and ease of mind to help me, I'll answer for it that I'd have her well in a month; but the girl has neither the one nor the other. She seems to look upon coming death in the light of a relief, rather than otherwise; a relief to her own mental trouble, and a relief to the household, in the shape of saving it what she eats and drinks. In such a condition as this, you must be aware that the mind does not help the body by striving for existence, it makes no effort to struggle back to health; and there's where Mamie Lee will fail. Circumstances are killing her, not the disease."

"Did you try her lungs?"

"Partially. I'm sure I am right. The girl will probably die, but she need not of necessity; though I suppose there will be no help for it. Good day."

Mr. Darbyshire walked away in the direction of his house, where his dinner was waiting; and Ben Rymer disappeared within doors, and began to pound some rhubarb (or what looked like it) in a mortar. He was pounding away like mad, with all the strength of his strong hands, when who should come in but Lee. Lee had never been much better than a shadow of late years, but you should have seen him now, with his grey hair straggling about his meek, wan face. You should have seen his clothes, too, and the old shoes out at the toes and sides. Burning people's letters was of course an unpardonable offence, not to be condoned.

"Mamie said, sir, that you were good enough to tell her I was to call in for some of the cough lozenges that did her so much good. But ——"

"Ay," interrupted Ben, getting down a box of the lozenges. "Don't let her spare them. They'll not interfere with anything Mr. Darbyshire may send. I hear he has been."

But that those were not the days when beef tea was sold in tins and gallipots, Ben Rymer might have added some to the lozenges. As he was handing the box to Lee, something in the man's wan and worn and gentle face put him in mind of his late father's, whose heart Mr. Ben had helped to break. A great pity took the chemist.

"You would like to be reinstated in your place, Lee?" he said, suddenly.

Lee could not answer at once, for the pain at his throat and the moisture in his eyes that the notion called up. His voice, when he did speak, was as hollow and mild as Mamie's.

"There's no hope of that, sir. For a week after it was taken from me, I thought of nothing else, night or day, but that Mr. Tanerton might perhaps forgive me and get Salmon to put me on again. But the time for hoping that went by; as you know, Mr. Rymer, they put young Jelf in my place. I shall never forget the blow it was to me when I

heard it. The other morning I saw Jelf crossing that bit of waste ground yonder with my old bag slung on his shoulder, and for a moment I thought the pain would have killed me."

"It is hard lines," said Ben.

"I have striven and struggled all my life long; only myself knows how sorely, save God; and only He can tell, for I am sure I can't, how I have contrived to keep my head any way above water. And now it's under it."

Taking the box, which Ben Rymer handed to him, Lee spoke a word of thanks, and went out. He could not say much; heart and spirit were alike broken. Ben called to his boy to mind the shop, and went over to Salmon's. That self-sufficient man and prosperous tradesman was sitting down at his desk in the shop corner, complacently digesting his dinner—which had been a good one, to judge by his red face.

"Can't you manage to do something for Lee?" began Ben, after looking to see that they were alone. "He is at a rare low ebb."

"Do something for Lee?" repeated Salmon. "What could I do for him?"

"Put him on his place again."

"I daresay!" Salmon laughed, and then demanded whether Ben was a fool.

"You might do it if you would," said Ben. "As to Lee, he won't last long if things continue to be as they are. Better give him a chance to live a little longer."

"Now what do you mean?" demanded Salmon. "Why don't you ask me to put a weathercock on yonder malt-house of Pashley's? Jelf has got Lee's place, and you know it."

"But Jelf does not intend to keep it."

"Who says he does not?"

"He does. He told me yesterday that he was sick and tired of the tramping, and meant to resign. He only took it as a temporary convenience, while he waited for a clerkship he was trying for at a brewery at Worcester. And he is to get that with the new year."

"Then what does Jelf mean by talking about it to others before he has spoken to me?" cried Salmon, going into a temper. "He thought to leave me and the letters at a pinch, I suppose! I'll teach him better."

"You may teach him anything you like, if you'll put Lee on again. I'll go bail that he won't get smoking again on his rounds. I think it is just a toss-up of life or death to him. Come! do a good turn for once, Salmon."

Salmon paused. He was not bad-hearted, only self-important.

"What would Mr. Tanerton say to it?"

Ben did not answer. He knew that there, after Salmon himself, was where the difficulty would lie.

"All that you have been urging goes for nonsense, Rymer. Un-

less the rector came to me and said, 'You may put old Lee on again,' I should not, and could not, attempt to stir in the matter; and you must know that as well as I do."

"Can't somebody see Tanerton, and talk to him? One would think that the sight of Lee's face would be enough to soften him, without anything else."

"I don't know who'd like to do it," returned Salmon. And there the conference ended, for the apprentice came in from his dinner.

Very much to our surprise, Mr. Ben Rymer walked in that same evening to Crabb Cot, and was admitted to the Squire. In spite of Mr. Ben's former ill-doings, which we had got to know of, the Squire treated Ben civilly, in remembrance of his grandfather, the clergyman. Ben's errand was to ask the Squire to intercede for Lee with Herbert Tanerton. And the Pater, after talking largely about the iniquity of Lee, as connected with burnt letters, came round to Ben's way of thinking, and agreed to go to the rectory.

"Herbert Tanerton's harder than nails, and you'll do no good," remarked Tod, watching us away on the following morning; for the Pater took me with him to break the loneliness of the walk. "He'll turn as cold to you as a stone the moment you bring up the subject, sir. Tell me I'm a story-teller when you come back if he does not, Johnny."

We took the way of the Ravine. It was a searching day; the wintry wind keen and "unkind as man's ingratitude." Before us, toiling up the descent to the ravine at the other end, and coming to a halt at the stile to pant and cough, went a woe-begone figure, thinly clad, which turned out to be Lee himself. He had a small bundle of loose sticks in his hand, which he had come to pick up. The Squire was preparing a kind of blowing-up greeting for him, touching lighted matches and carelessness, but the sight of the mild, starved, grey face disarmed him; he thought instead of the days when Lee had been a prosperous farmer, and his tone changed to one of pity.

"Hard times, I'm afraid, Lee."

"Yes, sir, very hard. I have known hard times before, but I never thought to see any so cruel as these. There's one comfort, sir: when things come to this low ebb, life can't last long."

"Stuff," said the Squire. "For all you know, you may be back in your old place soon: and—and Mrs. Todhetley will find some sewing when Mamie's well enough to do it."

A faint light, the dawn-ray of hope, shone in Lee's eyes. "Oh, sir, if it could be!—and I heard a whisper to-day that young Jelf refuses to keep the post. If it had been anybody's letter but Mr. Tanerton's, perhaps—but he does not forgive."

"I'm on my way: now to ask him to," cried the Pater, unable to keep in the news. "Cheer up, Lee—of course you'd pass your word not to go burning letters again."

"I'd not expose myself to the danger, sir. Once I got my old

place back, I would never take out a pipe with me on my rounds; never, as long as I lived."

Leaving him with his new hope and the bundle of firewood, we trudged on to the rectory. Herbert and Grace were both at home, and glad to see us.

But the interview ended in smoke. Tod had foreseen the result exactly: the rector was harder than nails. He talked of "example" and "Christian duty;" and refused point-blank to allow Lee to be reinstated. The Squire gave him a few sharp words, and flung out of the house in a passion.

"A pretty Christian *he* is, Johnny! He was cold and hard as a boy. I once told him so before his step-father, poor Jacob Lewis: but he is colder and harder now."

At the turning of the road by Timberdale Court we came upon Lee. After taking his faggots home, he waited about to see us and hear the news. The Pater's face, red and angry, told him the truth.

"There's no hope for me, sir, I fear?"

"Not a bit of it," growled the Squire. "Mr. Tanerton won't listen to reason. Perhaps we can find some other light post for you, my poor fellow, when the winter shall have turned. You had better get in-doors out of this biting cold; and here's a couple of shillings."

So hope went clean out of Andrew Lee.

III.

Christmas Day and jolly weather. Snow on the ground to one's heart's content. Holly and ivy on the walls in-doors, and great fires blazing on the hearths; turkeys, and plum-puddings, and oranges, and fun. *That* was our lucky state at Crabb Cot and at Timberdale generally, but not at Andrew Lee's.

The sweet bells were chiming people out of church, as was the custom at Timberdale on high festivals. Poor Lee sat listening to them, his hand held up to his aching head. There had been no church for him: he had neither clothes to go in nor face to sit through the service. Mamie, wrapped in an old bed-quilt, lay back on the pillow by the fire. The coal merchant, opening his heart, had sent a sack each of best Staffordshire coal to ten poor families, and Lee's was one. Except the Squire's two shillings he had had no money given to him. A loaf of bread was in the cupboard; and a saucepan of broth, made of carrots and turnips out of the garden, simmered on the trivet; and that would be their Christmas dinner.

Uncommonly low was Mamie to-day. The longer she endured this famished state of affairs the weaker she got; it stands to reason. She felt that a few days, perhaps hours, would finish her up. The little ones were up-stairs with their grandmother, so that she had an interval of rest; and she lay back, her breath short and her chest aching as she thought of the past.

Of the time when James West, the handsome young man in his gay regimentals, came wooing her, as the soldier did the miller's daughter. In those happy days, when her heart was light and her song blithe as a bird's in May, that used to be one of her songs, "The Banks of Allan Water." Her dream had come to the same ending as the one told of in the ballad, and here she lay, deserted and dying. Timberdale was in the habit of prosaically telling her that she had "brought her pigs to a fine market." Of the market there could be no question; but when Mamie looked into the past she saw more of romance than pigs. The breaking out of the church bells forced a rush of tears to her heart and eyes. She tried to battle with the feeling, then turned and put her cheek against her father's shoulder.

"Forgive me, father!" she besought him, in a sobbing whisper. "I don't think it will be long now; I want you to say you forgive me before I go. If—if you can."

And the words finished up for Lee what the bells had only partly done. He broke down, and sobbed with his daughter.

"I've never thought there was need of it, or to say it, child; and if there had been —— Christ forgave all. 'Peace on earth and goodwill to men.' The bells are ringing it out now. He will soon take us to Him, Mamie, my forlorn one: forgiven; yes, forgiven; and in His beautiful world there is neither hunger, nor disgrace, nor pain. You are dying of that cold you caught in the autumn, and I shan't be long behind you. There's no longer any place for me here."

"Not of the cold, father; I am not dying of that, but of a broken heart."

Lee sobbed. He did not answer.

"And I should like to leave my forgiveness to James, should he ever come back here," she whispered: "and—and my love. Please tell him that I'd have got well if I could, if only for the chance of seeing him once again in this world; and tell him that I have thought all along there must be some mistake; that he did not mean deliberately to harm me. I think so still, father. And if he should notice little Mima, please tell him ——"

A paroxism of coughing interrupted the rest. Mrs. Lee came down stairs with the children, asking if it was not time for dinner.

"The little ones are crying out for it, Mamie, and I'm sure the rest of us are hungry enough."

So they bestirred themselves to take up the broth, and to take seats round the table. All but Mamie, who did not leave her pillow. Very watery broth, the carrots and turnips swimming in it.

"Say grace, Andy," cried his grandmother. For they kept up proper manners at Lee's, in spite of the short commons.

"For what we are going to receive," began Andy: and then he pulled himself up, and looked round.

Bursting in at the door, a laugh upon his face and a white basin in

his hands, came Mr. Ben Rymer. The basin was three parts filled with delicious slices of hot roast beef and gravy.

"I thought you might like to eat a bit, as it's Christmas Day," said Ben. "And here's an orange or two for you youngsters."

Putting the oranges out of his pocket, and not waiting to be thanked, Ben went off again. But he did not tell them what he was laughing at, or the trick he had played his mother—in slicing away at the round of beef, and rifling the dish of oranges; while her back was turned, looking after the servant's doings in the kitchen, and the turning-out of the pudding. For Mrs. Rymer followed Timberdale in taking an exaggerated view of Lee's sins, and declined to help him

Their faces had hardly done shining with the unusual luxury of the beef, when I dropped in. We had gone that day to church at Timberdale; after the service, the Squire left the others to walk on, and, taking me with him, called at the rectory to tackle Herbert Tanerton again. He did not hold out. How could he, with those bells, enjoining good will, ringing in his ears?—the bells of his own church. But he had meant to come round of his own accord.

"I'll see Salmon about it to-morrow," said he. "I did say just a word to him, yesterday. As you go home, Johnny may look in at Lee's and tell him so."

"And Johnny, if you don't mind carrying it, I'll send a drop of beef-tea to Mamie," whispered Grace, hiding her wet eyelashes.

So, when it was getting towards dusk, for the Squire stayed, talking of this and that, there I was, with the bottle of beef-tea, telling Lee the good news that his place would be restored to him with the new year, and hearing about Ben Rymer's basin of meat. The tears rolled down old Lee's haggard cheeks.

"And I had been fearing that God had abandoned me!" he cried, full of remorse for the doubt. "Mamie, perhaps you can struggle on a bit longer now."

But the greatest event of all was to come. While I stood there, somebody opened the door, and looked in. A tall, fine, handsome soldier: and I did not at the moment notice that he had a wooden leg from the knee downwards. Ben's basin of beef had been a surprise, but it was nothing to this. Taking a glance round the room, it rested on Mamie, and he went up to her, the smile on his open face changing to concern.

"My dear lassie, what's amiss?"

"James!" she faintly screamed; "it's James!" and burst into a fit of sobs on his breast. And next the company was augmented by Salmon and Ben Rymer, who had seen James West go by, and came after him to know what it meant, and to blow him up for his delinquencies.

"Mamie not married!" laughed James. "Timberdale has been saying that? Why, what extraordinary people you must be! We were married at Bristol—and I've got the certificate in my knapsack

at Spicer's: I've always kept it. You can paste it up on the church door if you like. Not married! Mamie would not else have gone with me; neither should I have taken her."

"But," said poor Lee, thinking that heaven must have opened right over his head, that afternoon, to shower down gifts; "why did you not marry her here openly?"

"Because I could not get leave to marry openly. We soldiers cannot marry at will, you know, Mr. Lee. I ought not to have done it; that's a fact; but I did not care to leave Mamie, I liked her too well; and I was punished afterwards by not being allowed to take her to India."

"You never wrote, James," whispered Mamie.

"Yes, I did, dear; I wrote twice to Ireland, not knowing you had left it. That was at first, just after we landed. Soon we had a skirmish with the natives out there, and I got shot in the leg and otherwise wounded; and for a long time I lay between life and death, only partly conscious; and now I am discharged with a pension and a wooden leg."

"Then you can't go for a soldier again!" cried Salmon.

"Not I. I shall settle at Timberdale, I think, if I can meet with a pretty little place to suit me. I found my poor mother dead when I came home, and what was hers is now mine. And it will be a comfortable living for us, Mamie, of itself: besides a few spare hundred pounds to the good, some of which you shall be heartily welcome to, Mr. Lee, for you look as if you wanted it. And the first thing I shall do, Mamie my dear, will be to nurse you back to health. Bless my heart! Not married! I wish I had the handling of him that first set that idea afloat!"

"You'll get well now, Mamie," I whispered to her. For she was looking better already.

"Oh, Master Johnny, perhaps I shall! How good God is to us! And James—James, this is the little one. I named her after you: Jemima."

"Peace on earth, and good-will to men!" cried old Lee, in his thankfulness. "The bells said it to-day."

And as I made off at last to catch up the Squire, the little Mima was being smothered with kisses in her father's arms.

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men!" To every one of us, my friends, are the bells saying it, this later Christmas, 1877.

JOHNNY LUDLOW.

THROUGH HOLLAND.

IT now becomes necessary to return to the period of my first visit to Holland. The two preceding papers have been interludes in the narrative. I have endeavoured as far as possible to keep each thread distinct, in order to avoid confusing the mind of the reader. The second visit took place in the month of June of this present year: the first in the months of August and September, 1876. To that time we must now go back.

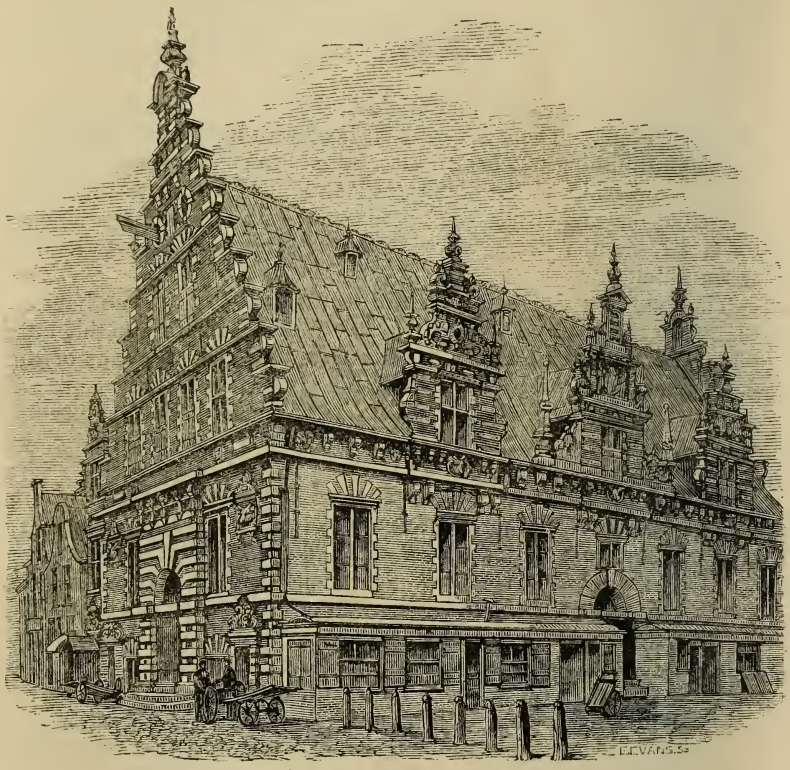
It may be remembered that I left Arnhem on the Tuesday morning for Amsterdam. There I found A. busy with his brush and pencil, putting in finishing touches and last strokes to sundry sketches which ought to raise him to the dignity of P.R.A. He was ready for a final exit from the capital, yet put up his traps with a sigh and a longing for a six months' work amongst the art treasures and antiquities around him.

The following day we started for Rotterdam, stopping an hour on the road at Gouda. Everyone visiting Holland should see this little place; not so much for itself, as for the twenty-eight windows of the great church. Nowhere else can be found such an assemblage of old glass. You examine window after window, wondering at the beauty, and surprised that the town has not long since been deprived of its treasures.

Various traditions exist as to the painters of these works of art. One of them says that they were painted by two Englishmen, who, as soon as they were finished, were deprived of their eyesight, in order that they should do no more. The windows date back to the sixteenth century, and are equally beautiful, in design, tone, and colouring. Such windows are not often seen, yet they are inferior in breadth and grandeur to the three windows in the old church of Amsterdam. No other church in Holland possesses anything to approach the latter.

Gouda itself is a quaint, primitive place, with few attractions for the visitor. It is chiefly noted now for its manufactories of clay pipes, which supply the Dutch with the means of smoking the fragrant weed. Very proud and fond of their clays they are. They smoke them brown and black, then treasure them up, stack them and rack them, row after row. Does a friend call in, who has left his smoking gear behind him, one of these brown, old veterans is immediately produced and lent as a treat and an honour. Then they puff away at each other, and gradually get into thick clouds; and talk of the value of money and the state of the market; passing on to the blue eyes of Gretchen, or the merits, temper, and disposition of their respective vrouwen. For the Dutch are matter-of-fact in their loves, and their courtships, and their home interiors.

We had left Rotterdam with a moderate amount of luggage. We returned to it overwhelmed with the weight and responsibility of our treasures. Sundry packing cases containing old clocks and pictures; brown paper parcels that refused to fit in anywhere, and had to be carried, and were constantly getting lost; large hampers of old Worcester, old Delft, old Wedgwood. Spanish enamels quaint and curious; old pencilled jars, antique watches, and graven glass. Many things that some people would have thought impossibly ugly, but we



Old House, Haarlem.

had secured as rarities. On account of these treasures, most of which were insecurely packed, we had decided to return to London as we had come, by the long route; avoiding all changes and railways, and the dangers they too often entail to objects, as Mrs. Malaprop would say, of "bigotry and virtue."

Arrived at the Rotterdam station, we freighted a cart and walked down the quays to the boat in procession. This seemed the safer plan, but proved the contrary. Half way over the Boomptjies, the man in charge of the truck came into violent contact with one of the large cameons dashing along at its usual rate of rapidity and

carelessness. This did some damage to our possessions, yet less than might have been expected. It was, however, annoying, for the reason that it might so easily have been avoided; and because, until we reached home we could not tell how far the number of pieces had multiplied though not improved. The boat was reached without further disaster.

Bag and baggage in safe quarters, we had some hours to devote to Rotterdam; to looking up and refreshing our memories with all the

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old points by which our admiration had been excited on first landing in Holland. In time we found our way to the excellent table d'hôte at the Hôtel des Bains: and encountered what seemed a slightly extortionate charge. Desirous, according to civilised customs, of washing our hands before dinner, and occupying the room for about the space of one minute and a half, it was charged a gulden in the bill—1*s.* 8*d.* Considering that the dinner and the wine amounted to a sum not very far short of a pound, the item appeared more than unreasonable. It is in such small matters that innkeepers make mistakes and retard the success of their houses. Going back to wash our hands when dinner was over, soap and towels had been removed from the room, and a second demand would doubtless have exacted another gulden. We dispensed with the luxury. It is not the loss of

the money in these cases that calls forth a certain amount of irate indignation : but what appears as the injustice of the charge : applying the screw where it should be relaxed.

That evening, in the twilight, I wandered on to the new bridge in course of construction, and caught the view of Rotterdam that memory has retained most vividly. The bridge was not open to the public, and only by permission I mounted the long flight of steps to its heights. A., afraid of slipping through the beams and plunging into a cold bath against his inclination, thought discretion the better part of valour and remained below. He lost much.

The bridge was at a great elevation. It seemed to land me above the roofs of the houses and the masts of the vessels. The water was far below. It almost appeared that a fall would ensure loss of consciousness before the fatal plunge. The sun had sunk in the west, and left behind a few flakes of red and gold, now fast fading. The tints of evening were vanishing. Above the water, high in the dark blue, the large silver crescent of the moon hung suspended in the clear atmosphere. The sky was cloudless beyond the few tinted snowflakes in the dying sunglow. A few evening stars shone out clear and pale, each moment growing less faint. But nothing could rival in exquisite and quiet beauty that silver crescent. Her rays were cast upon the shimmering water, here and there disturbed by a solitary boatman punting across the stream. So far above the town, and at this hour, absolute silence reigned. From the immense mass of shipping no sound ascended. The workmen had all gone home. I was alone upon the gigantic structure, and sat there long after darkness had fallen. It was difficult to quit the magic scene. The great height seemed to give one a sense of power and command over the world. I could have persuaded myself that I was a magician exercising a spell upon the town; which might arise or vanish, pass into activity or stagnation, with the wave of a wand. The moon silvered the houses, and brought them into outline; cast lights and shadows, and threw into relief the towers and steeples and octagon domes that here and there reared their frowning heads in grim, stern silence. But her magic was most seen upon the water, where she cast forth her jewels in countless profusion: a pathway made by no mortal hand. When darkness had quite set in, and the air from this elevated point was growing chilly, with caution and some little difficulty I returned to earth. I felt that I had been out of the world for a short spell: above the ordinary level of mankind and the commonplace. It is humiliating to have to descend to accustomed tone and habits after one of these exalted flights. But it is impossible always to be up in the clouds. There must be a return to sober duties and active life. We cannot always look down upon the world from a height. Romance and reality may both have a share in life, they never go hand in hand; the one is the rule, the other the exception. No doubt well for us. Too much romance might enervate the mind,

and unfit it for the duties of life; the rubs, the disappointments, the circumstances that will not be controlled; the hard battles, the many tumbles that come to most of us once and again. "Man never is, but always to be blessed."

But if there can be little of the commonplace anywhere on the ordinary level of this world of ours, it surely was in Rotterdam to-night. The houses, their quaint outlines softened and subdued by the darkness, looked as if they belonged to an age associated in our minds with little of the prosaic tameness of detail of this latter part of the nineteenth century. Yet let us turn to the best side of the picture. If we have lost in some ways, we have no doubt gained in others. Not one of the least of these is our command over space and the elements. This running to and fro at breathless speed, so that in a short time we may see all the kingdoms of the world; compare one with another; subdue and civilise the most distant; bring all within one overshadowing influence. We have compassed the world with an iron girdle, and send our thoughts from pole to pole almost with the speed at which light travels. The ancients read the stars and foretold the return of comets; we forecast the fall of meteors and the approach of storms: thus saving life, even though it belong to these nineteenth century days. So they have it not all in their favour those giants of the middle ages. Future generations are not very probably destined to the glories and achievements of our own day, which have revolutionised nations and changed the face of the earth beyond what seems the possibility of an equal extent of progress and discovery in the ages that are yet to come. The mind of man is fathomable; his genius bounded; his powers, like the sea, have their limits. So far shalt thou go. It seems not too much to say we have almost reached those limits. We have command over earth and sea; we shall never have it over the air: people may try to make to themselves wings; they never will. It was not meant to be. A celebrated physician lately said he had prosecuted his researches into science to such a point that a very little more and he would render the body immortal and conquer death. Thinks he to succeed? We could balance the world had we but a resting place for the sole of the foot. So when we come to think of it: of the round world and they that dwell therein: of Him who guides the stars, and rules the heavens, and holds the winds in the hollow of His hands: who permits man now and again to make small discoveries and inventions, gigantic to his understanding, but that after all cannot change one law of nature, or turn the current of the softest wind that blows: we have to come back, whether we will or not, to the knowledge of our own weakness. The mightiest amongst us are but children of a larger growth.

We went on board that night, and steamed away in the dark hours of the morning, not without sorrow and regret at leaving the quaint little kingdom of Holland. It had been a pleasant and profitable

time : an acquaintance with the fine arts and many antiquarian gems and relics : a study of character interesting and unusual : types not always seen : costumes and ornaments curious and rare. There had been no great beauty of landscape. But such as it was it possessed an individuality that marked it for its own. Not interesting perhaps to live amongst; but of sufficient charm to render a short visit the reverse of tedious. In the quaint architecture of its towns, Holland has it all her own way. Here she holds the palm and keeps it. Hitherto it has not been the fashion to visit Holland; as I have said; but I believe it will become so. Especially in these days, when Society has taken a rage for everything of a bygone date. When dining-rooms are furnished without carpets; and revel in antique sideboards, and chairs with stiff, charming outlines suggestive of mediæval times and primitive customs, but oh ! how hard and cramped to sit in for three hours at a stretch. When Society decorates its tables no longer with sweet scented roses and graceful fuchsias and regal camellias, and delicate azaleas, and choicest exotics of skill and cultivation; but with cowslips and daisies, blue cornflowers and the artless but not elegant poppy; when ladies, instead of revelling in bouquets of rare blossoms, grace brilliant assemblies with huge bunches of buttercups. All this is charmingly simple, but the play, to be perfect, ought to be carried out in all the details of life. Otherwise it becomes incongruous; somewhat laughable.

But a love for the antique; bringing the forms without the ceremonies (if the reader will pardon a very bad pun) of a past century unto the present; is certainly on the increase. It is a fashion perhaps really destined to take root and become a habit. And if this be so, Holland also will take her place. Many a lesson may here be learned; many a useful idea carried away. But should the tide of travellers ever thoroughly set in Holland-wards, let the Dutch take warning. Let them be content with moderate gains. Let them eschew extortion and keep in the honest paths of medium profits, if they can. Already the hotels are as dear and not as comfortable as those of other and more popular countries. Already they charge beyond the full value of their wares. And should this increase they will rue their error. Englishmen and Americans, say they, will pay anything demanded of them. They will learn, perhaps too late, that an Englishman as much as anyone likes his quid pro quo for his money. We say nothing of the others. And let them remember that Holland after all has its drawbacks. It does not appeal to everyone's tastes and sympathies. It has no beauty of scenery, such as is found in greater or less degree in all other countries. It has its canals and terrible odours; its clouds and mists and variations of climate; its bad coffee—and its raw herrings.

But as yet there is little to complain of. There is an unusual amount of simplicity amongst them. You enter many a shop and feel that you may safely trust that face behind the counter. There

is honesty in its every line; good faith in the steadfast look of those eyes. Let them keep all this, and they will do well. And how

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charming and refreshing the simple life of the higher classes. How many a lesson they read their foreign neighbours. Their bouquets consist not of cowslips and buttercups—as far as I know. I fancy

they would as soon think of mint and rue: but they carry out the simple element into their every-day life instead. They dwell together in sociable freedom, with all its attendant pleasures and advantages. They are characterized by a quiet self-respect that is quite sufficient to give them the respect of the world they live in and the world at large. I confess that what I have seen of the inner life of the Dutch I like. My experience has been short and limited; but not limited for the extent of the time so devoted. There is much to admire in them; much that is worthy of praise and imitation. In my second sojourn amongst them I gained a somewhat more extensive knowledge of them than in my first: and it but increased my regard and good opinion. I saw nothing that did not make me wish for a more intimate acquaintance: a deeper and more extended knowledge of people and character. Should that time ever come I shall probably see in them at once more and less than I do at this moment. I shall no doubt find that they have at bottom many of the habits and thoughts of other nations; are often actuated by similar influences; possess alike that one touch of nature that makes the whole world kin: only separated by the confusion of tongues and the differences of habits and customs. But as the matter now stands I record my liking and esteem for the Dutch, which with time and opportunity might very well go on to affection.

In these pages I have entered into no abstruse questions. My attention was rather given to observing the country and the people: and I have confined myself chiefly to what I saw and felt. I have endeavoured to record conscientious and unexaggerated impressions: from which alone I have written. I took no notes whatever during my stay in the country. But the accuracy of the statements, as far as they go, may be trusted. Where I have not been quite sure of a fact, it has been withheld. It remains but to crave the indulgence of the reader for many shortcomings of which the writer is but too painfully conscious: and to beg of him to exercise that leniency of spirit it is the high privilege of those to minister who sit in judgment.

We steamed away from Rotterdam in the small hours of the morning. Darkness was still upon the face of the earth. But the hours crept on, and the dawn broke, the sun rose, and with it a new day. We left the Maas and the land, and gradually lost the last faint view of Holland. We were out on the broad sea: a sea calm and placid as we had found in coming. The sun, who had hidden his face so often during the past month, now poured his hot beams upon the decks with a power that seemed determined to make up for many wet days. The whole passage was cloudless. The day drew to a close; the sun went down, flooding sky and sea in golden light. The colours chased each other, broad, brilliant, and gorgeous. Then twilight crept over the face of the waters, a soft wind sprang up, and night gradually closed in. Out came the stars, and the silver crescent of the moon, which I had revelled in the previous

night. The scene was changed. The houses of Rotterdam, with their quaint outlines, were no more. Life and energy could only be imagined. No lights glimmering from numberless streets. No stream of people, each occupied with his own work and way; each contributing his link to the great chain that binds the world together and bids it speed. No sounds of revelry on the one hand, or of sorrow and sighing on the other. All this existed, but not at sea. These things do not reach us out on the broad ocean. Many of us have experienced being away from land for a few weeks, or, it may be, months, without the possibility of learning anything of what is passing on shore. A perfect and deathlike separation from the world and mankind. All things standing still with us, whilst perhaps on land wars have broken out, and revolutions have shaken the fate of an empire to its centre; and the great and crowned of the land may have passed from time into eternity; and the cry has gone through the nation "Le roi est mort, vive le roi!" whilst we at sea have been performing our daily round of narrowed duties and pleasure calmly and quietly as if chances and changes were not, and how we have landed with a feeling almost as of having risen from the dead. We many of us know all this: and yet more. A vacant chair that was filled when we started in a household near and dear to us: a matter of greater self interest when all is done than the perils of an empire or the fate of a battle.

Nothing of this sort was likely to occur in our short crossing from Rotterdam to London. We had left the English coast in darkness, and watched the North Foreland light its beacon. In like manner we returned. Too dark to see the coast, the light was there bright and glowing. So we entered the river, and passed the bell buoy, with its weary clang: traced now one light ship, now another. By eleven o'clock we had got far down. I turned in for a rest: A. remained on deck. About midnight I was aroused from a sleep, which on board ship is never quite one thing or the other, by a jerk and a slight crash, and went on deck to discover the cause. In some way we had managed to carry away the mast of a barge, without sinking the craft. Collision No. 1 at Rotterdam. No. 2 in the Thames. Were we going in for No. 3? The slight catastrophe had banished sleep, and I now took my turn on deck. A., on the contrary, went down. The hours passed on until about two o'clock, and we anchored at a wharf to land the cattle. We had a large stock on board; but the animals, in the hold during the voyage, had not been inconvenient to the passengers. Now commenced the fun of the journey: and only two of us amongst the passengers profited by the occasion.

The scene was strange and weird. The night was yet perfectly dark. The faces of the drovers on the wharf were thrown out into intense relief by the flaring torches they carried. Their coarse faces and wide grinning mouths inspired a feeling of horror and repulsion.

They looked impish, almost satanic. No doubt they appeared worse than they were. The gangways were put down, the hold was thrown open, and they commenced to get up the cattle. These consisted of sheep and oxen: and, like the Irishwoman's famous pig, they invariably go the opposite way they are driven. They were no exception in this instance. The scene was ludicrous and remarkable. One animal after another, as if it knew its fate in store, would ont land. The men pulled, and pushed, and thrust at them with sticks; shouted and yelled; dogs barked and jumped, and careered wildly about; everything and everyone was in a state of excited

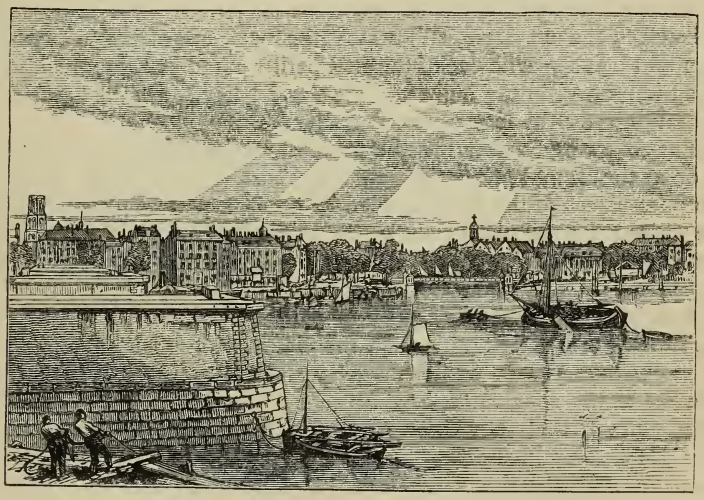
AMSTERDAM.

uproar. Occasionally, a bullock or young calf safely landed on deck, would turn tail and fairly leap over all down into the lowest depth of the hold: landing at the bottom still and motionless as a dead thing. Not dead, however, or even hurt. For the dog, and the man, and the stick, the barking and yelling, would soon get it up again and send it once more on its journey. So things went on until finally every animal was landed. Save one sheep, declared the tally keeper. The hold was searched, and the deck; and still the black sheep was missing and was never found. Whether he jumped overboard; whether he was eaten up during the voyage by the others; whether he evaporated into thin air; whether he was never put on board at all, which is possible; or whether he had slipped on shore unseen by the tallyman, which was more probable: was never

known to the two passengers who assisted as spectators at a ceremony, the charms of which were to a great extent those of night and novelty.

And now we come to the last and final stage.

It was past four o'clock before we again started up the river. At half-past four the dawn had broken. The feeling of chilliness and fatigue that takes possession of us at this hour had seized upon me. I turned in. A. at the same moment turned out. He had slept since midnight and was ready for anything. He went upon deck. In a few moments I had lost all sense of outward things. At five o'clock I was again awakened by a crashing in front of me; the sense of a collision. I was nearly jerked out of my berth; a custom-house



ROTTERDAM.

officer in the next cabin was quite thrown out of his. By this time I had got used to the feeling and the sound. Nevertheless, I got up and went on deck. As I opened my door, the officer opened his, looking startled and anxious. Above I found things in a state of pent up excitement; that hushed silence which often follows escape from a great peril. The first face I saw was A.'s, pale as death. Passing was a huge iron steamer, big enough to have swallowed us. Men and officers on our decks were little if any less white than A. As soon as they were a little composed they told us the meaning of it all. We were turning a bend in the river—I think Blackwall. As we turned upwards, this huge steamer was turning downwards on her wrong side, right upon us. It seemed, as they said, that no earthly power could save the ship. Go she must: be split in two and run down by the advancing steamer. The officers rushed forward in the hope

of escaping the falling masts. Of the two men at the wheel, one left it and threw himself flat upon the deck. Only the other man at the wheel and the captain kept their posts. Each ship saw the danger. Orders were given: on went the vessels. It seemed, I have said, that no earthly power could save us: and, but that the large steamer was very lightly loaded, the captain declared that nothing could or would have saved us. But just as she ran into us she swung slightly, grazed the ship from the point she touched and passed off. The point she touched was damaged, the rails were carried away and we suffered no further harm.

Had the vessel cut us asunder, though every other man on board had been saved, I could not have escaped. She struck immediately upon my berth. Thus of all on board I had the most cause to be thankful for this escape from so great a danger. It was impossible to listen to the narrative, and watch the pale, awe-stricken faces of men and officers, evidence of the real peril we had sustained, without being impressed in the highest degree, and I hope with the best sense of gratitude for the mercy vouchsafed.

The following Sunday was the first day of the month. I chanced to be at the Temple Church. In that most perfect of all services, the pure voices of the boys blended as usual in perfect harmony with the older voices of the lay clerks. The exquisite tones of the ancient organ guided them, controlled by one who has no superior in his office.

And here, reader, I must again crave thy indulgence, if I conclude with words that are best heard in the mouth of a preacher, or belong to works that aim at higher things than instruction or amusement. But the words so soon after the incident narrated, were so applicable, so real, that they came almost with the force of a message: that I felt, should I write at all about Holland—which I anticipated not to do—they could only form the text or conclusion of my subject.

It was the last verse of the fourth Psalm. The pure voices of the boys were rising and falling to an exquisite chant. My mind had wandered at the moment to that scene on board ship in the early morning, so recent, and so vivid, its full impression more than ever upon me in this my first attendance at church after my return home. When suddenly, with a thrill of emotion I can never forget, the following words went floating amidst the beautiful arches of the roof and the fluted pillars:

"I will lay me down in peace and take my rest, for it is Thou, Lord, only, that makest me dwell in safety."

CHARLES W. WOOD.

PASSING.

We are not parted yet, but death dews rise
And pearl your hueless temples and wan brow,
And o'er the hazel lustre of your eyes
A change has come—a gleam of glad surprise—
By this, I feel your life is ebbing now,
Passing, though not divided from me yet,
Half of my heart! twin spirit of my soul!
My lids are weary; why are they not wet?
Joy so divine is on your forehead set,
It forces back hot tears that else would roll.

By the dim shrouded night-lamp near your bed,
Weird shadows flicker up and down the room;
And from the half-burnt pine-log sparks of red
Glimmer and dance, then sink to ashes dead,
Like living creatures fading into gloom.
I hear the blast sweep down the garden lawn,
The barn-owl's pinion beats against the panes;
A little while, and one more day will dawn,
But you, sweet love! are fainter than a fawn
Chased by the hunters till its young life wanes.

Dying, you gaze on death without a fear;
I see your soul through those dark irids burn
In a bright flame serenely pure and clear,
Leaping to leave its shrine of marble here,
White, cold, and graceful as a Parian urn.
My lovelight still! how glorious afar,
Soaring above the torches of the skies,
To golden gates that blessèd saints unbar,
Before God's City where His angels are;—
Grief must fall dead when one like you, love, dies!

Jane Dixon.

SEEING A GHOST.

DID I ever see a ghost? Well, I can't say, young ladies, that I ever fairly saw one meself; but I was knowing to a ghost that Norah saw, my sister's daughter. Will I tell ye about it? But, if I take up the morning with story-telling, how will my mince-meat get done? Help me, ye say? Well, now as you be in my kitchen, you two young ladies, if ye will each of you take a knife in your hand, and fall to at paling these apples, I'll not say no. A hand or two at the paring of the apples will be a great help to me entirely. Sure I think yer father and mother as good as gold, and I'm doting on ye all, for it's the good place I have here; and ye're a fine, growing family, and noble aiters, which keeps me tight to my cooking. But the story, ye say. Well, I'll sit down here, by yer leave, young ladies, and pick the currants afore I set on to my chopping. There: and now ye shall hear about the ghost poor Norah saw.

My sister Kitty was the oldest of us all; and a mighty gintale, edicated woman she was, for she was born and reared before my father came to his losses with the crops, and she took the shine off the whole of us. Kitty married a man by the name of Terrance Cassidy, a joiner to trade, but not strong; and he died five years after, leaving her with two children, Susan and Norah. Both were fair-looking girls enough: but it's Norah that was the beauty: a gentle, nice-looking child, she was, with a skin like the lilies.

My sister Kitty had but little to do with, but she was saving, and struggled along wonderfully. She had a little place rent free, for it was hers, and she took to teaching the farmers' childer round, and one would cut her turf for her and another would haul it home. Some would send potaties and meal, and some butter and eggs, in payment for the teaching: and what with one thing and another she managed to rear the childer well, though it was little my poor father could spare her, for we were a large family.

Well, as I'm telling ye, young ladies, Norah turned out to be a beauty, fair and pleasant to look upon. Susey was a good-looking girl, but nothing to compare with her. Now, ye may be thinking to look at me, that it's not truth I'm telling, seeing she was my own niece, when I say she was such a wonder. I never was to call handsome meself, but I've come through a dale, and, being light complected, I freckled easy: so with one thing and another, my own mother wouldn't know me the day. But Norah was not my sort: she had the shape and make and manners of a lady; and scarcely a boy in the parish but was mad in love with her. There were two in particular, above all the rest. One was a lad of the name of Tim Connor, whose father had a bit of a farm that Tim and himself

managed. But he was a wild sprig of a boy, that would work one day and frolic the next; and my sister Kitty gave him the cold shoulder. The other was Dan O'Brien, an orphan, who had been reared well: a steady young chap, that liked to read books with Norah, and had a good word from everybody. He went to an old soldier that had recaved a terrible grand edication in his youth, and he taught him to keep accounts, and other lashings of learning that I know nothing about. Well, ye see, being so steady and striving so hard after the larning, and keeping himself neat and genteel, my sister Kitty thought fine things of him, and always said there was more in his head than the world knew of.

Norah had a way with her of always being smiling and agreeable, for she had the sweet temper; but she was a shy maiden, and it was hard to make out who she favoured. The two young men wasted no love on one another, as you may be sure, for each was jealous of the other, especially Tim Connor, who knew he was not as good as Dan.

One Halloween night there was a gathering of us all at my sister Kitty's, and we sat round the fire trying our luck with burning nuts, naming apple-pips, and such like, and having great sport entirely.

"I wonder where is Dan O'Brien," said Kitty, suddenly. "Have any of you seen him the night, boys?"

"I have," says Larry Doolan. "He was up at our house with his uncle when I came out. Peter O'Brien has come back from America, and he says it's a fine place entirely, where you have to search for trouble if you want it, and luck looks for you."

"Glory now," says Kitty, "if old Peter O'Brien is in Ireland? I hope he'll come over the length of this, for it's myself will be glad to see him."

Well, the words were but out of her mouth when the door opened and in he walked, Dan behind him. Kitty rose up, and a warm welcome she gave the two.

"Susey, stir up the fire," says she, "and, Norah, draw up a chair for Mr. O'Brien. I'm glad you've come over, Dan, and I'm pleased to see your uncle. Many's the time I've thought of you, Peter, and wondered what had become of ye, away in that hathenish place."

Well, the discourse went on betwixt them, as it does between two friends long separated, but we took to our games again. And I ought to be telling ye, perhaps, that my sister Kitty was years and years older than me, so that I was like a girl compared to her. Larry Doolan begins; he was always a talker:

"Here's two nuts that I've named; now watch them, boys, till we see how they'll make out the gether." With that he laid them in the turf blaze, and they burned peaceably till they fell into ashes.

"Good luck to them, whoever they are," says Dan O'Brien. "What names had they, Larry?"

"Tim Connor and Norah Cassidy; no less," said Larry, with a mischievous grin.

Dan's face darkened; he gave a short laugh, but said nothing. Norah, whatever got into her I don't know: but she speaks up with spirit.

"You have brought me such luck, you must name my apple for me, Larry."

"Troth, I will," says Larry. "It's done."

Norah counted the pips. "We'll marry," cries she. "Tell me, Larry, who it is."

Putting his hand to his mouth, he said in a loud whisper that we all heard: "Tim Connor."

"Hold your tongues," says Kitty. "Norah, I'm fashed wid your noise. It's a little respect ye have for old friends."

"Uncle," says Dan, suddenly, "I'll go back to America with you. I'll not say no to you any longer: my mind's made up—and, boys, if I am living and well, it is there I shall be this night next year. So if that is punch you are serving, Susan, I'll take a drop to drink to the future in."

Norah's fun seemed over for that night. She made a great show of throwing an apple-paring over her shoulder, and tried to laugh when she put her hand into the empty dish three times when she was blindfolded; but the red rose had left her cheek, and there was a frozen look about her when she said good-night to us all that made me feel uneasy.

We had a good job of spinning to do that winter, and my mother being old and poorly, I looked after the meals beside; so it was nearly a week before I had the chance of getting to Kitty's again. Susy was backwards and forwards with a drawing of tea or a cake of white bread for my mother, and I asked her after Norah.

"She's middling," says Susy. "Mother herself thinking she's got a fever, and drenches her with balm tea. But Dan O'Brien's trip to America is working on her more than a fever would, and a word from him would be more to her than all the teas my mother will ever brew."

"Did Norah tell you so?" I asked.

"No," says Susey; "it's not her way to speak out her mind. But as sure as grass grows and water runs, it's that that's ailing her."

"If that be true, it's myself won't stand by and see poor Norah's heart break," I says to Susan; "for I knew they just doted upon one another."

In the evening I went over to Larry Doolan's mother's, where Dan and his Uncle Peter were stopping. "Good evening to ye all, and good luck be with ye," says I, going into the kitchen, where Dan and Larry with a neighbour or two were sitting round the fire. "I stepped over for a bit of a chat, and to try your new wheel, Mrs. Doolan. Don't stir, boys," says I, as they were rising, "I'll take a seat here in

the corner, and I'll look to you, Dan, to see me safe the length of my own door."

Dan sat down again, and I tried the wheel; and then we began to talk of his going away over to America.

"It's a wild tramp, any way," says Peggy Doolan. "Peter has had luck, but that's not saying that every one will have the same, and sorra a worse wish I have for Dan more than he'll come back to us before the year's out, contented to take what comes among the people he was born with."

"It is kind of you, Mrs. Doolan," says Dan, "to say you will miss me when I'm gone. It's only adding another good turn to the many you've done me. But, if there was nothing else to spur me on, the wish I have to return a little of all the kindness that has been shown to me, an orphan lad, would do it. In America, as I hear, there's a chance for all to do well and get rich, straight as the wind that fills the sails in taking us to the new country."

"Never fear, Dan," said old Peter, "there's a chance for you, and a good one, too. And Mrs. Doolan will be the first to call you a sharp-sighted lad for seeing it when you bring her back some of the gold you'll make."

With that I got up and wished them good-night; and reminded Dan that he was to see me home.

"That I will," says Dan, in his ready way. And we went along mighty sociable.

"Will ye wait here a bit, Dan, while I ask after poor Norah?" says I, as we came up to Kitty's door.

"Is she ailing?" he asked, quite startled.

"She got a turn on Halloween, that left her but poorly. Her mother feared she might be taking the fever."

He seemed staggered. "I'll stop outside, Biddy," says he, "for I'd be sorry to disturb Tim Connor. I suppose he is with her."

I lost all patience at this, and I asked him whether he was a fool. "You are searching for briars, Dan O'Brien, when there's roses afore ye. Is Tim Connor going to America, that Norah should grieve for him? You're not worth a tear; and, if I were Norah, sorra a one I'd shed for ye, ye wrong-headed boy."

The poor fellow caught me by the hand. "Is it truth you are speaking, Biddy?—and does Norah think of me?" says he, in a breathless kind of way, as if his throat had a lump in it. "Bless you for this night's work—for you have made a miserable man happy."

"Will ye come in with me, Dan?"

He didn't answer, but followed me like a daft, for I never saw one so upset with hope. When I opened the door the fire was low, and I thought the kitchen was empty; but when the blaze shot up, I saw Norah sitting in a corner, her head on her hands. Dan stood in the shadow of the door, and she only saw me as I went forward.

"I'm glad of the sight of you, Aunt Biddy," says she. "My

mother and Susey are gone over to the Maloneys with their work, and I'm sitting idle here, for the thirl of the wheel makes my head ache."

"I heard you were poorly," says I. "Has Tim Connor been dancing with Biddy Nowland, and are ye jealous of them?"

"Oh, Aunt Biddy," she gasps, "if you speak of Tim Connor you'll break my heart. That's nearly broken already. But for my foolishness on Allhalloween, it would not be aching as it is."

I don't think she meant to say so much, for she looked confused after the words slipped out. Well, I just pushed Dan forward and stole out myself; and as I shut the door I heard her startled cry that had more of joy than fright in it, and saw him on his knees beside her stool with his arm about her waist, so I knew I had reason to be satisfied, and went home feeling easy.

"Is Dan O'Brien going to America, or not, Susey?" I asked the next morning, when Susan came over to see my mother.

"Yes, he is going," she said; "and mother and Norah are in a great way entirely. He was waiting to speak to my mother, when he got home from the Maloneys' house last night. He wants Norah to wait for him for two years, and if he is not able to do well for her by that time, it will be because his health and strength has failed him."

"And will she wait, Susey?"

"Will she wait? Why, Aunt Biddy, she is clean daft about him. She has scarcely touched her wheel this week past; but it's flying round to-day, and she's been singing like a lark ever since she rose this morning."

My heart was light for Norah's sake, for I never doubted Dan would do well. He had the spirit of it in him, and he had good sense and health, and strength to back him in it. In a fortnight's time he was to start with his Uncle Peter for Liverpool; and he was as hopeful over it as any one that ever drew breath.

When the day came I went to Kitty's to bid him good-bye. We all stood in the kitchen together. Kitty was charging him about taking care of himself; Susy was joking about the elegant dress she was to have as bridesmaid; Norah only was quiet and pale. But she brightened up and looked hopeful whenever he spoke to her.

"Here's the jaunting car, Dan, with your uncle and Larry Doolan," says I, looking out.

"Keep up your heart, Norah darling," whispered Kitty to the poor little thing, leaning white and cold against the old dresser. And then she put her arms around Dan's neck. "Ye were always a son to me," she says; "and whether ye bring an empty purse or a full one, if ye come back with the same heart and character ye go with, I'll think you rich, my boy."

"Good luck to you, Dan, and a speedy return," says Susy; and

when he came to me I couldn't speak to him, for I was choking with tears.

"The blessing of Heaven light on you, Biddy," says he. "You brought us together, and I'll never forget that. I leave her in your care," he whispered in my ear. "It's the greatest trust I can put in a living creature."

I was afraid Nora would be overcome with the parting; but she bore up bravely. She stood white and trembling, but she neither cried nor fainted. And Dan, the fine fellow, leaving a blessing for us all, got into the jaunting car, and went away as full of hope as a spring morning.

But about the ghost, ye ask? Sure and I'm coming to it in the end, young ladies; but ye must just have patience. It was poor Dan's ghost that Nora saw—I tell ye that much.

The next year was a wonderful one for changes. First, my father came home one night after a Fair day, and took to his bed, never to rise from it again. It was near rent day, and he had gone to sell a cow to help to make out what was wanting; but he met with friends, and when he came the length of home there was little left of the price of the cow. After poor father was gone we couldn't keep the place, so mother agreed to go with me and make our home with Kitty, who had plenty of room; and the rest went out into the world.

It was a hard year, and terrible scraping people had to make it out at all. In the beginning of May, Kitty was down with a slow fever, and before June came we had laid her beside my father. Susey was ill when her mother died, and Norah took the fever next. Those were the dark days, when we watched the two poor young things lying side by side, with their minds wandering: sometimes over old sports and games they'd had; sometimes calling on their poor mother, so lately laid in the cold churchyard.

I thank Heaven that there's an end to all things, and there came an end to that black time. Susan rose up, weakly at first, but gaining strength every day. Norah wavered a long time, and then began to mend slowly. She would lie where the sun fell on her, with Dan's letters clasped to her bosom, and never spoke for a whole day together. Myself couldn't write a word to him, not being handy at the pen, to let him know what had happened; and Norah said she was glad he didn't know it. "No news is good news, Aunt Biddy," she would say. "He would be only fretting himself with thinking it over."

It was just at this time that Tim Connor spoke to my mother about Susey. I was taken by surprise, for I believed Tim had no thought of any one but Norah. Somehow I was glad he hadn't taken her liking for Dan to heart; and I knew Susey would make a good wife for him. I feared he had been a bit wild about taking a drop, or the like of that; but he was steady, on the whole. And

Susan was a good girl and just bound up in him; and she had no fear for the future.

On Michaelmas Day they were married, Susan looking as pretty and blooming as a summer rose. Tim took her home to her father's house, as happy and hopeful both of them as could be. And from that day we found we could trust Tim, and he made her a good husband.

Norah did not get strong. She had a worn, weary, drooping look about her: and when Mike the post came round she'd look after him with feverish eyes. But he never left a letter at our door now.

"Norah, darling," said I to her one day, "why don't you get a letter from Dan?"

As soon as I said it, I saw what was ailing her. She tried to make out that he was not to blame, giving one excuse or another; but in the midst of speaking she broke into sobs, that betrayed how his silence had told on her heart.

In the first months of his absence, and till after poor Kitty was gone, his letters came as regular as the sun. But they had stopped all at once, as I tell ye, young ladies, and we knew not why! All we heard of him after that was through a boy called James Branagan, who had learned the saddler's trade in Dublin, and who took a notion to go to America. Jim's mother was a neighbour of ours. He had been in our place to bid his mother good-bye, and had heard about Tim Connor's wedding. And in the letter that his mother got from him from America, he said he had met with Dan O'Brien, and that Dan was doing right well and keeping a store in New York with his Uncle Peter, and wished to be remembered to old friends.

Well, as I say, no news came from either of 'em after that, neither Dan nor Jim. He found later that Jim had taken fresh ship, and gone to California to look for gold; but that had nothing to do with Dan, and why he never wrote puzzled us all. Poor Norah never let a word about Dan or his neglect slip through her lips from that day; and the creature had such a quiet way with her of bearing up and asking nobody's help that I couldn't find words to speak to her about him.

When the winter was passing through, we found it hard work to strive on and keep together. Tim Connor, seeing that, offered to take my mother home, and give her a place at his fireside, and we thought it for the best to give up the bit of a house, and try for service.

And so, the time went on, and the next Halloween saw us scattered. Susan married and in her own house; my mother no longer with a hearth of her own, beholden to Tim Connor for the bit and sup; but I must give Tim his due and say he never grudged it, or anything else he did for us; my father and Kitty, God rest them, lying cold under the early snow that whitened their graves. Norah

was with the Widow Branagan, to give her a hand with her winter's spinning. I was elsewhere, doing my best, young and strong yet.

One evening Norah and I had been out together, over at Mary Doolan's. Coming home, I couldn't help feeling desponding like at the changes and the scattering there had been amongst us.

"My poor father and your mother, Norah, darling," says I—"who would have thought they would be lying in their long home the night?"

"Oh, Aunt Biddy, dear," says she, "they're blest, for they are at peace and rest: and many's the one here would be glad to change places with them."

With that she turned and left me; and I stood still, watching her hurry away through the moonlight, her head bowed down. My heart was sore for her, for I knew she had trouble in hers; but I could give her no comfort, for as I told you, she was a shy creature, and would never speak of her own feelings.

The spring came round again, and Norah was still with the Widow Branagan. It's wonderful the comfort she took out of the wheel. It was flying from morning till night, and the widow told me the girl never gave herself a minute's rest, save when she was sleeping.

All this while we never heard from Dan. I could only think that Norah had wrote something to him that had given him offence, or maybe, wounded his feelings; for he was a terrible high-spirited boy. Anyway, he seemed to have forgotten Norah. At times I used to wish I could write: I'd have wrote to old Peter to ask what was up.

My poor white-faced darling, she made no show of what was wearing out her heart, but went round and about the widow's house as kind and beautiful as the breath of summer. It was a happy day for Martha Branagan when she took Norah home, for an own daughter couldn't do more for her. Norah was up in the morning and had her wheel flying at the break of day; and when the widow rose to her breakfast, there was the little stand on the hearth, with its white cloth and tea-cup standing ready for her. It's toasted white bread and new-laid eggs she would serve her up, fit for any lady in the land.

But she had lost all taste for eating herself, you see. It was now again the fall of the year. The wind had begun to whistle through the bare hedges, and there was a dry deserted look in the empty fields and lanes that made the blazing turf-fire the soul of comfort. How long it was since Dan O'Brien left for America, we hardly cared to reckon. I've not taken the note of the time for ye like a calendar, young ladies, but the fifth year was going on. Myself was in a farm-house, close against Martha Branagan's, and I could see Norah every day. I suppose the poor creature had changed. She was as pretty as ever in my eyes; but there was something about her that kept the boys from offering a word of love to her; they daredn't do it more than if she had been one of the painted saints in the chapel.

She had been a quiet girl always, so there was no difference in regard to that; but I'm thinking it was a look in her eyes that has said to me many and many's the time, "it's all over," as plain as if her tongue spoke it. But this isn't coming to the ghost ye say, young ladies? Well now, we are close upon him.

It was in the fall of the year, I tell ye. One evening late, I threw my apron over my head and ran over to the widow's. I was afeard I would not see Norah; for Susey had been ailing for a month or two, and Norah spent every minute she could spare attending to her and looking after the childer.

When I went in at the door, there sat Norah on a little stool by the fire, just as I had seen her on the night I took Dan over with me. "Why, Norah, girl," said I, "what's come to ye that the wheel's not going?—you're surely not resting yourself?"

She smiled, and looked at me. But it was a queer smile and a queer look, and her face was white as my apron.

"Draw up a seat and sit down by me, Aunt Biddy," says she. "I am not fit to be working to-night, and I'm glad you are here to be with me."

As I sat down, she leaned her head over on my knees, and turned up her face to look at me. My heart gave a great thump, for I saw something was amiss out of the common. Her face startled me.

"What's come over ye, darling?" says I. "Have ye heard any ill news?"

"Dan is dead, Aunt Biddy," says she.

"Dead!" says I. "Grace be about us! Mercy forbid!"

"Mercy be praised," says she. "Better for him to be dead than false. I can bear it now, Aunt Biddy."

"But who told you Dan was dead?"

"I've seen him, Aunt," says she. "He appeared to me."

"Seen him! What—seen his ghost?"

"Seen his spirit. Yes."

"The saints be good to us! And when did ye see it?"

"You shall hear it all. To-night at dusk I went over to Susey's, and found her weak and tired working with the baby. I took it from her, and, making her a bowl of good gruel, she supped it while I got the children to bed; and then she lay down comfortably herself. I promised her I would sit up for Tim, and so I went into the kitchen and sat down by the fire to hush the baby off to sleep. In a little while it was quiet, and I kept it on my knee and threw my apron round it for fear I should waken Susey if I laid it down. I think I must have fallen into a doze as I sat there thinking, but a cool stream of air, blowing in, half roused me. I opened my eyes and saw the stars shining through the half-opened door, and felt the wind raising my hair and lifting the apron off the baby's face. Then I saw Daniel O'Brien standing beside me, or, rather, between me and the door, and there was a hard look on his cold, white face. I can't

tell you how I felt, Aunt Biddy; just at the first moment I thought it might be himself, and I tried to speak. Then I saw that it was not *him*, but only what was left of him, for the figure was shadowy, and I knew that Dan had died. I suppose I grew dizzy: for I remember a blind swimming coming over me and trying to move without the power; anyway, when I looked again I was alone, and the wind was blowing the door backward and forward. I was so dazed that I had no power to rise till Tim came home and took the baby from me, wondering at the cold kitchen. 'I was sleeping, I think, Tim,' says I, 'and let the fire go down.' 'Yes, and dreaming too,' says he, 'for you look wild.' And then I ran home here, Aunt Biddy, and I have been in a dream ever since."

Well, I didn't know what to answer her: ghosts is gruesome things to talk of, ye see.

"I must speak out this night, Aunt Biddy," she goes on. "Dan wrote to me his last precious letter just before poor mother was taken with the fever, saying how lonely it was for him over there, and how long it was to wait, but that his uncle could not spare him just yet to come for me. Without taking time for thought, Aunt Biddy, I wrote back, asking if I should go out to him—I would if he wished it. I knew my mother had Susey and could spare me. *But that letter he never answered.* I can't tell you the shame that has been mine, Aunt Biddy, for I saw I had gone too far and turned him against me: it has just been like a burning fire of agony in my breast. But now that he's dead he can't think ill of me more, and to-night I have been able to cry. Nobody knows what the sweet comfort of tears is to those who can shed them."

I rose up with that, pitying her with all my heart. "Norah," says I, "my head feels staggered and confused, but I'll go over and get to bed. When I am at my prayers maybe the rights of it will come to me."

She kissed me, and seemed more like the girl she was before her mother died; and away I went down the road with my heart in my mouth. I had crossed the lane by Kitty's old house, and was close at the stile when a man springs over it; and I, what with the ghosts in my mind and other miseries, was so flabbergasted that I lays hold of him, just to keep me on my feet.

"I ask your pardon," says he.

"Saints in glory!" says I. And but for feeling he was flesh and blood, I should never have kept my hold. For it was the voice of Dan O'Brien.

"Why, is it you, Biddy?" he cries. And then, after a few words between us, a great light burst upon me. There was some misapprehension; but I didn't yet quite see what.

"Will you come with me, Dan, and see Norah?" I says. "I'm going to her."

"Would you take me to see another man's wife?" he asks, looking

at me sternly. "I have seen her already once to-night, with her child in her arms."

"Norah Cassidy is not any man's wife," says I, just as stern in my turn. "She has been faithful to you, Dan O'Brien, and always will be. The child you saw in her arms was her sister Susey's, who married Tim Connor years ago."

The grip that he took of my arm was something to be felt. We stood against the stile, him and me, and had it out in a few short words. *He had never had Norah's letter at all* — the one she told me she had written, offering to go out—maybe through some misdirection: and that idiot, Jim Branagan, had told him it was Norah Tim Connor had married. Leastways he had said Mrs. Cassidy's daughter—and Dan took it to be nobody but Norah. So he never wrote to her again, and had believed all this while that she was Tim's wife.

"Will ye come and see her *now*, Dan?" says I. "Her heart's just broke for ye, and she believes you dead."

I trembled so when we reached Martha Branagan's that I could hardly lift the latch. The widow was not come in yet, and Norah was alone sitting as before. As to Dan, I could hardly keep him back.

"Are you back, Aunt Biddy!" cries Norah.

"Yes, darling, thanks be to goodness. I'm back, and I've brought good news for you."

"But what's the matter?" she asks. "How strange you look!"

Well, with that I took to laughing and crying, like a simpleton; and then I screamed to relieve myself. And the last I saw of them as I shut the door, he was kneeling beside her, as she sat on the stool in the blaze, with his arm round her waist, just as I had seen them that night years before.——And I see you be well through with the apples, young ladies; and I hope ye have not eaten them. Not a ghost, after all! ye say. Was there ever the gratitude of that? Why, don't I tell ye that she took him for a ghost? And a ghost he looked, and no better, so shadowy was he and thin. And did they marry, you want to know? In course they married. And it's a plentiful and genteel home they've got, for Dan had prospered, and two or three childer to the fore; and they are as happy, young ladies, as the day's long.

A MYSTERIOUS VISITOR.

By the Author of "East Lynne."

(*Reprinted.*)

ON Monday morning, the 11th of May, 1857—the year, as the reader may remember, that England was destined to be shaken to its centre with the disastrous news of the rising in India—there sat in one of the quiet rooms of Enton parsonage a young and pretty woman, playing with her baby. It was Mrs. Ordie. The incumbent of Enton was Dr. Ling, an honorary canon of the county cathedral. Mrs. Ling was from India: her family connexions, uncles, brothers, and cousins, had been, or were, in the civil or military service of Bengal. Consequently, as the daughters of Dr. Ling had grown towards womanhood, they were severally shipped off, with high matrimonial views, according to a fashion that extensively prevails.

Miss Ling, Louisa, had gone out first, and had secured Captain Ordie. Constance went next, and espoused Lieutenant Main, to the indignation of all her relatives, both at home and out, for she was a handsome girl, and had been set down for nothing less than a major. The third daughter, Sarah Ann, very young and pretty she was, went out the following year, with a stern injunction not to do as Constance had done.

Before Sarah Ann could get there, Mrs. Ordie's health failed, and she was ordered immediately to her native climate. Upon landing, she proceeded to Enton. The voyage had been of much service to her, and her health was improved. And there we see her sitting, on the morning of the 11th of May, nearly twelve months after her arrival, playing with her infant, who was nine months old. In August she and the child were going back to India.

Mrs. Ordie was much attached to this child, very anxious and fidgety over it: her first child had died in India. She fancied, this morning, that it was not well, and had been sending in haste for Mrs. Beecher, who lived close by, just beyond the garden. The honorary canon and the rest of the family had gone to spend a week in the county town.

Mrs. Beecher came in without her bonnet. She had been governess to Louisa and Constance, had married the curate, and remained the deeply-attached friend and adviser of the Ling family. In any emergency Mrs. Beecher was appealed to.

"I am sure baby's ill," was Mrs. Ordie's salutation. "I have been doing all I can to excite her notice, but she will keep her head down. See how hot her cheeks are."

"I think she is sleepy," said Mrs. Beecher. "And perhaps a very little feverish."

"*Do* you think her feverish? Whatever shall I do? Good mercy, if she should die as my other baby did!"

"Louisa," remonstrated Mrs. Beecher, "do not excite yourself causelessly. I thought you had left that habit off."

"Oh, but you don't know what it is to lose a child; you never had one," returned Mrs. Ordie, giving way to her excitement. "If she dies, I can tell you I shall die with her."

"Hush," interrupted Mrs. Beecher. "I believe there is little, if anything, the matter with the child, except her teeth, which renders children somewhat feverish. But if she were dangerously ill, you have no right to say what you have just said."

"Oh yes, I have a right, for it is truth. I would rather lose everything I possess in the world, than my baby. What a long while Mr. Percival is!" she added, walking to the window and looking out.

"You surely have not sent for Mr. Percival?"

"I surely have. And if he does not soon make his appearance, I shall send again."

Mrs. Ordie had always been of most excitable temperament. As a girl, her imagination was so vivid, so prone to the marvellous, that story books and fairy tales were kept from her. She would get them unknown to her parents, and wake up in the night, shrieking with terror at what she had read. Hers was indeed a peculiarly active brain. It is necessary to mention this, as it may account, in some degree, for what follows.

There was really nothing the matter with the child, but Mrs. Ordie insisted that there was, and made herself miserable all the day. The surgeon, Mr. Percival, came: he saw little the matter with it either, but he ordered it a warm bath, and sent in some medicine—probably distilled water and sugar. Mrs. Beecher came in again in the evening. Mrs. Ordie hinted that she might as well remain for the night, to be on the spot should baby be taken worse.

The curate's wife laughed. "I think I can promise you that there will be no danger, Louisa. You may cease to torment yourself, and go to sleep in peace."

"If anything does happen, I shall send to call you up."

The Lings kept four servants. Two of these, a man and maid, were with their master and mistress; the other two were at home. And there was also the child's nurse. After Mrs. Beecher left, Mrs. Ordie crept along the corridor to the nurse's room, where the baby slept, and found the nurse undressing herself.

"What are you doing that for?" she indignantly exclaimed. "Of course you will sit up to-night, and watch by baby."

"Sit up for what, ma'am?" returned the nurse.

"I would not leave the child unwatched to-night for anything. My other baby died of convulsions; they may also attack this one.

Convulsions are so uncertain: they come on in a moment. I have ordered Martha to sit up in the kitchen and keep hot water in readiness."

"Why, ma'am, there's no cause in the world for it," remonstrated the surprised nurse. "The baby is as well as well can be, and has never woke up since I laid her down at eight o'clock."

"She shall be watched this night," persisted Mrs. Ordie. "So dress yourself again."

"I must say it's a shame," grumbled the nurse, who had grown tired of her mistress's capricious ways, and had privately told the other servants that she did not care how soon she left the situation. "I'd remain up for a week, if there was need of it, but to be deprived of one's natural rest for nothing, ma'am, is too bad. I'll sit myself in the old rocking-chair, if I must stay up," added the servant, half to herself, half to her mistress, "and get a sleep that way."

Mrs. Ordie's eyes flashed anger. The fact was, the slavery of Eastern servants had a little spoiled her for the independence of European ones. She accused the girl of every crime that was unfeeling, short of child murder, and concluded by having the infant's crib carried down to her own room. She would sit up herself and watch it.

The child still slept calmly and quietly, and Mrs. Ordie sat quietly by it. But she began to find it rather dull, and she went to the book-shelves and took down a book. It was then striking eleven. Settling the lamp on a small table at her elbow, she began to read.

She had pitched upon the "Vicar of Wakefield." She had not opened the book for years, and she read on with interest, all her old pleasure in the tale revived. Nearly half an hour had elapsed when she suddenly heard footsteps on the gravel path outside, advancing towards the house, and she looked off and listened. The first thought that struck her was, that one of the servants had been out without permission, and was coming in at that late hour; which, as her watch, hanging opposite, told her, was twenty-five minutes past eleven. But she had not heard the bell ring. It must be explained that Enton parsonage stood back from the high road and was surrounded by trees. Two iron gates gave ingress to it from the road. They were far apart, for the house was low and long; the kitchens, forming a right angle with the house, projected out, their windows looking sideways on the broad half-circular gravel path that led from one gate to the other. The entrance-porch was near the kitchens. At the back of the house stood the smaller house of the curate; a narrow pathway leading to it from the parsonage. *That* house faced the side lane, into which lane its small iron gate opened. These gates, the rector's two large ones and the curate's small one, were always locked at sunset, and the premises were then deemed secure. There was no other entrance to them whatever, and all three of the gates were lofty and spiked at the top, preventing the possibility of

any marauder's climbing over. Did any friends come to either of the two houses after the gates were locked, they had to ring for admittance.

Mrs. Ordie heard these footsteps in the stillness of the night, and her eyes instantly glanced at her watch. Twenty-five minutes after eleven. Who was it, at this late hour? But, even as the question passed through her mind, an expression of astonishment rose to her face; her eyes dilated, she drew in her breath and listened intently. If ever she heard the footsteps of her husband, she thought she heard them then.

Yes, yes! It was impossible to mistake his sharp, firm step, which she had never heard since she left him in Calcutta. It was very close now, nearly underneath her window. With a cry of joy she arose and opened it.

"George, dear George! I knew your step. Whatever has brought you home?"

There was no answer. The footsteps were still advancing, and Mrs. Ordie leaned out. He had come in at the further gate, had passed along the front of the house, and was now underneath her window. She saw him distinctly in the light cast on the path from the kitchen. There was no mistaking him for any other than Captain Ordie, and he wore his regimentals. He lifted his face, she saw it clearly in the light, and looked at her. Then he went on and stepped inside the porch. She called to him again.

"George, you did not hear me. Don't knock, baby's ill. Wait a moment, and I will let you in."

Closing the window, she sprang to the door. Her lamp was not suitable for carrying, and she would not stay to light a taper: she knew every stair well. But she was awkward at the fastenings of the front door, and found she could not undo them in the dark, so ran into the kitchen. The cook, sitting up in obedience to her orders, was lying back in a chair, her feet stretched out upon another. She was fast asleep and snoring. A large fire burnt in the grate, and two candles were alight on the ironing-board underneath the window, one of them guttering down. Servants will be wasteful.

"Martha! Martha!" she exclaimed, "rouse yourself. My husband's come."

"What!" cried the woman, starting up in affright, and evidently forgetting where she was. "Who's come, ma'am?"

"Come and open the hall door. Captain Ordie is there."

She snatched one of the candles from the table, and went on to the door again. The servant followed, rubbing her eyes.

The door was unlocked and thrown open, and Mrs. Ordie drew a little back to give space for him to enter. No one came in. Mrs. Ordie looked out then, holding the candle above her head. She could not see him anywhere.

"Take the light," she said to the maid, and stepped beyond the

portico. "George!" she called out, "where are you? The door is open." But Captain Ordie neither appeared nor answered.

"Well, I never knew such an extraordinary thing!"

"Ma'am," said the servant, who began now to be pretty well awake, "I don't understand. Did you say anybody was come?"

"My husband is come. Captain Ordie."

"From Mrs. Beecher's?" asked the woman.

"Mrs. Beecher's, no! What should bring him at Mrs. Beecher's? He must have come direct from Portsmouth."

"But he must have come to the door here from the Beechers'," continued the servant. "He couldn't have come any other way. The gates are locked, ma'am!"

In her wonder at his appearance, this fact had not struck Mrs. Ordie. "One of them must have been left unfastened," she said, after thinking. "That was very careless, Martha. It is your place to see to it, when Richard is out. Papa once turned a servant away for leaving the gates open at night."

"I locked both the gates at sundown," was the woman's reply. "And the key's hanging up in its place in the kitchen."

"Impossible," thought Mrs. Ordie. "Where is Susan?"—alluding to the other servant at home.

"Susan went to bed at ten o'clock, ma'am."

"It is not possible that the gates can have been locked, Martha. The captain came in by the upper one, the furthest from here. I heard him the minute he put his foot on the gravel, and knew his step. You must have thought you locked them. George!" added Mrs. Ordie, in a louder tone. "George!"

There was no answer. No sound whatever broke the stillness of the night.

"Captain Ordie!" she repeated. "Captain Ordie!"

The servant was laughing to herself, taking care that her young mistress did not see her. She believed that Mrs. Ordie had dropped asleep, and had *dreamt* she heard somebody on the gravel.

"I know what it is," cried Mrs. Ordie, briskly. "He has never been here before; and, finding the door was not immediately opened to him, has gone on to Mr. Beecher's, thinking this the wrong house."

She ran down the narrow path as she spoke, which branched off round by the kitchen window; the maid followed her. It was a light night.

But nothing was to be seen of George Ordie. The curate's house, a small one, presented the appearance of a dwelling whose inmates are at rest; the blinds were drawn before the windows, and all was still. Mrs. Ordie ran over probabilities in her mind, and came to the conclusion that he could not have gone there. The Beechers were early people, and had no doubt been in bed an hour ago. Had her husband knocked there, he would be waiting at the door still, for they had not had time to come down and let him in.

"It could only have been fancy, ma'am," cried Martha.

"Silence," said Mrs. Ordie. "How can it have been fancy? I heard my husband, and saw him."

"Well, ma'am, I argue so from the gates being fast. He couldn't have got over 'em, because of the spikes."

"The gates cannot be fast," returned Mrs. Ordie, "and it is foolish of you to persist in saying so—only to screen your own carelessness."

"I wish you'd just please to look at the gates," retorted Martha.

"I will," said Mrs. Ordie, anxious to convict Martha to her face. "It is an utter impossibility that Captain Ordie can have come in at a high, locked gate, with spikes on the top; he would not attempt to do so. He would have rung the bell."

"That's what I say," answered Martha. "I dreamt t'other night," she muttered, as she followed her mistress, "that a man came down that there path with lovely gownd pieces to sell: I might just as well have riz up the house, and had *him* looked for."

They gained the broad walk, and proceeded round towards the further gate. It was locked. Martha sniffed.

"Why, it is like magic!" uttered Mrs. Ordie.

"I was certain about its being locked, ma'am. And that's why I say it must be fancy."

Mrs. Ordie was indignant. "Is this gate fancy?" she said, shaking it, in her anger. "Don't tell me again that my husband is fancy. How could I have seen and heard him if he were not come? Captain Ordie!" she called out, once more. "George! where can you have gone to?"

"Come to the other gate, Martha."

They retraced their steps, Mrs. Ordie looking in all directions for a gleam of scarlet, and reached the other gate. It was locked. Mr. Beecher's gate was locked. Then she went about the garden, and looked and called: but there was no trace of Captain Ordie. The servant walked with her, half amused, half provoked.

"Can he have slipped in-doors," murmured Mrs. Ordie, "while we went round to the Beechers?" And she went in to look, taking the opportunity to glance at her child. But Captain Ordie was nowhere to be seen, and she had never been so much perplexed and puzzled in all her life.

"Then he must have gone on, as I thought, to Mr. Beecher's," was her last solution of the enigma. "They were possibly up, and let him in directly. And they are keeping him there till morning, that he may not disturb us, knowing that baby is ill."

"But about the gate," interrupted the servant, returning to her stumbling-block, "how could he have got through it?"

"I know he did get through it, and that's enough," responded Mrs. Ordie, disposing summarily of the difficulty. "Soldiers are venturesome and can do anything. I will go and fetch him. You stop here, Martha, and listen to baby."

Once more Mrs. Ordie sped to the curate's. She knocked at the door, and stood back to look up at the house. "They have put him into their spare bed," she soliloquised; "Mrs. Beecher has kept it made up this fortnight past, expecting their invalid from India. My goodness! I never thought of it! they have no doubt come together, in the same ship. George may have gone to Calcutta; and, finding James Beecher was coming, must have got leave, all in a hurry, and accompanied him."

Picking up some bits of gravel, she threw them at Mrs. Beecher's bed-room window. This brought forth the curate in his nightcap, peeping through the curtains.

"It is I, Mr. Beecher. Have you got Captain Ordie here?"

"Make haste, Anne," cried the curate, turning his head round to speak to his wife. "It is Mrs. Ordie. Perhaps the child is in a fit."

"My husband," repeated Mrs. Ordie. "He is here, is he not?"

"Yes; directly," answered the curate, imperfectly understanding, but opening the casement about an inch to speak.

"Is she really worse, Louisa?" exclaimed Mrs. Beecher, who now appeared at the window. "I will soon be with you."

The curate, believing the matter to be settled, drew in his night-cap. But Mrs. Ordie's voice was again heard. "Mr. Beecher! I want you."

"Dress yourself, my dear," cried Mrs. Beecher to him, in a flurry. "I dare say they want you to go for Mr. Percival. If the baby is really worse, and it is not Louisa's fancy, I shall never more boast of knowing children. She is calling again."

Mr. Beecher re-opened the casement. "I am putting on my clothes, Mrs. Ordie. I am coming."

"But you need not do that. Has your brother arrived?"

"Who?"

"Your brother: James Beecher."

"No. Not yet."

"Some ship is in: it has brought my husband. Tell him I am here."

"We'll be down in a minute," called out Mr. Beecher, and making desperate haste. "Anne, Captain Ordie's come."

"Captain Ordie!" exclaimed Mrs. Beecher.

"Mrs. Ordie says so."

"Then we shall have James here to-morrow. How very unexpected Captain Ordie's arrival must have been to his wife? And to find his child ill!"

Louisa Ordie waited. Mrs. Beecher came down first, in a large shawl, her bonnet tied over her nightcap. They began to speak at cross purposes.

"Is he coming? Have you told him?" impatiently asked Mrs. Ordie.

"My dear, yes. But he had gone upstairs in slippers, and his

shoes were in the back kitchen. Captain Ordie's arrival must have taken you by surprise."

"I never was so much surprised in my life," answered Mrs. Ordie, standing still, and not offering to stir. "I heard his footstep first, and knew it, even in the distance. I am so glad! He must have come with James Beecher."

"Ay, we shall have James here to-morrow. But, my dear, let us not lose time. Is the child very ill?"

"She is not worse; there is no hurry," answered Mrs. Ordie, planting her back against a tree, as deliberately as if she meant to make it her station for the night, and gazing up at the casement which she knew belonged to their spare bedroom. Mrs. Beecher looked at her in surprise.

"Will he be long?" she resumed. "There's no light."

"He will be here directly," said Mrs. Beecher; "he is finding his shoes. I suppose Kitty put them in some out-of-the-way place, ready for cleaning in the morning."

Another pause, and the curate appeared.

"Oh, Mr. Beecher, *you* need not have got up," was Mrs. Ordie's greeting. "I am sorry to give you all this trouble."

"It is no trouble. Do you want me to go for Mr. Percival?"

"You are very kind, but we shall not require the doctor to-night: at least I hope not. I have been watching her myself: I had her brought down to my own room. Nurse behaved shamefully over it, and I gave her warning."

"Pray let us go on and see how she is," said Mrs. Beecher, never supposing but they had been called up by the state of the child.

"When he comes. You say he will not be long. Had he undressed?"

"Had who undressed?"

"My husband."

Mrs. Beecher stared at her in amazement. "I do not understand you, Louisa. For whom are we waiting here?"

"For my husband, of course. You say he is finding his shoes."

Both Mr. and Mrs. Beecher thought her child's illness was turning her crazy. They looked at her, and at one another.

"My dear, you are mystifying us," spoke the wife, drawing her shawl tighter round her shoulders. "Is your husband coming out; here; into the garden? Are we to wait here for him?"

"Why, you know he is coming out, and of course I shall wait for him. Only think, he wore his regimentals!"

"His regimentals!"

"Yes. Just as if he were on duty."

"Where is Captain Ordie?" interposed the curate.

"Well, that's a sensible question, from you," laughed Mrs. Ordie. "I suppose he is in your spare bedroom, though I see no light. Or else hunting for his shoes in your kitchen."

"Child," said Mrs. Beecher, taking hold of her tenderly, "you are not well. I told you to-day what it would be, if you excited yourself. Let us take you home."

"I will not go without my husband. There. And what makes him so long? I shall call to him. Why, you have locked the door!" she exclaimed. "You have locked him in."

"Locked who in, child?" said Mrs. Beecher. "There's nobody in the house but Kitty."

"My husband is there. Did he not come to you?"

"No, certainly not. We have not seen him."

"Mr. Beecher," she impatiently uttered, "I asked you, at first, whether my husband had come here, and you said yes."

"My dear young lady, I must have misunderstood you. All I heard, with reference to Captain Ordie, was, that he had come: I supposed to your house. He has certainly not been to ours."

"Then what were you talking of?" she reproachfully asked of Mrs. Beecher. "It was shameful to deceive me so! You said he had gone upstairs in slippers, and was finding his shoes. You know you did."

"My dear child, I was speaking of Mr. Beecher. I did not know you thought your husband was here. Why did you think so?"

"If he is not here, where is he?" demanded Mrs. Ordie. "You need not look at me as though you thought I was out of my senses. Do you mean to say you have not seen Captain Ordie?"

"We have not, indeed. We went to bed at ten, and heard nothing, until you threw the gravel at the window."

"Where can he be? What can he have done with himself?"

"Did he leave you to come to us? When did he arrive?"

"It was at twenty-five minutes after eleven. I was sitting by baby, reading the 'Vicar of Wakefield.' All at once I heard footsteps approaching from the upper gate, and I knew they were my husband's. I looked out, and saw him, and called to him; he did not seem to hear me, but went in to the portico. I ran down to let him in, and to my surprise he was not there, and I thought he must have come on to you."

"Then you have not yet spoken with him?" exclaimed Mr. Beecher."

"Not yet."

"Are you sure it was Captain Ordie? Who opened the gate to him?"

"No one. The gate is locked. There is the strange part of the business."

"My dear Mrs. Ordie! I fear it must be all a mistake. Captain Ordie would not arrive here on foot, even if he landed unexpectedly; and he could not have got through a locked gate. Perhaps you were asleep."

"Nonsense," peevishly replied Mrs. Ordie; "I was as wide awake

as I am now. I had come to that part where the fine ladies from town had gone in to neighbour Flamborough's and caught them all at hunt-the-slipper, Olivia in the middle, bawling for fair play. The ballad 'Edwin and Angelina' came in a few pages before, and that I skipped. I assure you I was perfectly awake."

"I do not think it possible to have been anything but a delusion," persisted Mr. Beecher.

"How a delusion?" angrily asked the young lady; "I do not know what you mean. If my hearing could play me false, my sight could not. I heard my husband, and saw him, and spoke to him. He was in his regimentals: were they a delusion?"

"This is very strange," said Mrs. Beecher. "He would not be likely to travel in his regimentals."

"It is more than strange," was Louisa Ordie's answer, as she looked dreamily about. "He is in the grounds, somewhere, and why he does not come forward, I don't know."

The mystery was not cleared up that night. No Captain Ordie made his appearance. The next day Mrs. Ordie sent for her father, to impart to him the strange circumstance. He adopted his curate's view of the affair; and, indeed, the universal view. Mrs. Ordie was much annoyed at their disbelief; and she actually, in spite of her friends, had Captain Ordie advertised for, in the local papers: he *was* in England, she said, and it would be proved so.

When letters next arrived from India, there was one from Captain Ordie, which gave proof positive that he was not, and had not been in Europe. Mrs. Ordie was perplexed.

The weeks went on, and the time fixed for the departure of Mrs. Ordie and her child drew near. But meanwhile the disastrous news had arrived of the outbreak in India of that dreadful mutiny, and it was deemed advisable to postpone it.

She was sitting one day in a gloomy mood. She had not heard from her husband for some time (his last letter was dated April); and now, as she found, another mail was in, and had brought no news from him. The rising at Delhi, where Captain Ordie was quartered, was known to her, but not, as yet, the details of its more disastrous features. She did not fear his having fallen: had anything happened to him, Mr. Main, or one of her sisters, would have written. They were all at Delhi.

As she thus sat, Mrs. Beecher came in, looking very pale and sad. Dr. and Mrs. Ling had gone off in their pony carriage to the county town, to pick up news. They were extremely uneasy.

"Another mail has been in these two days!" she exclaimed to Mrs. Beecher. "News travels slower to Enton than anywhere. Have you heard from James Beecher? You don't look well."

"James is come," replied the curate's wife. "He came overland."

"And you have been worrying yourselves that he is dead!" retorted Louisa. "How are things going on, over there?"

"Very badly. They cannot be worse."

"Does he know anything of George?" continued she. "I think he might spare just a minute from his fighting to write to me. What *is* the matter with you? You have not brought bad news for me?" she added, her fears touched, and rising in excitement. "Oh, surely not! Not FOR ME!"

"James's news is altogether very dispiriting," returned Mrs. Beecher, at a loss how to proceed with her task. "My husband is gone to bring Dr. and Mrs. Ling back. We thought you might like them to be at home."

"Has George fallen in battle? Have those half-caste rebels shot him down? Oh ——"

"Pray be calm, Louisa!" implored Mrs. Beecher; "if ever you had need of calmness in your life, you have need of it now."

"Is he wounded? Is he dead?" interrupted Mrs. Ordie, with a bitter shriek. "Oh, George! dearest George! and I have been calling you hard names for not writing to me! What is it?"

"There is a great deal to be told, my child. James Beecher was at Delhi in the midst of it."

Louisa suddenly rose and flew from the room. Mrs. Beecher, supposing she had gone to her chamber, went after her; but could not find her there. She had gone out of the house.

A thin man, looking fearfully ill, fair once, but browned by an Eastern sun, was lying on the sofa in the curate's parlour, when a young, excited woman came flying in.

"Mr. James Beecher," she uttered, seizing his hands imploringly, "when did it happen? I am Mrs. Ordie."

"Has my sister-in-law told you—anything?" he hesitated.

"Yes, yes. I know the worst. I want particulars."

He had risen into an upright posture, though he could scarcely support himself, and she sat down beside him. He was a church missionary, a widower with children. "Are you sure that you can bear the details?" he asked, believing, from her words, that she knew the general facts.

"I am sure. Omit nothing. You were at Delhi."

"I went there in the spring, to say farewell to some friends, ere I came home. At Delhi I was taken worse, and lay ill there."

"But about the rising?"

"I am coming to it. On the second Monday in May, after breakfast, bad news came in. The 3rd Light Cavalry had dashed in from Meerut, fully armed, and were slaughtering the Europeans. Eighty-five of this regiment had been tried by court-martial at Meerut, for refusing to handle the greased cartridges, and sentenced to imprisonment. Their sentences were read out to them on parade on the previous Saturday, the 9th, and they were sent to gaol. On the 10th, Sunday, the regiment rose, released the prisoners, massacred the European officers, their wives and children, and on the 11th came

to Delhi, in open revolt. I struggled up, dressed myself, joined the friends I was staying with, and we waited further news. It came in too soon. The mutineers had gone towards Deriowgunge, shooting all the officers they encountered. The brigadier ordered out the 54th Native Infantry and two guns; and, I believe, a detachment of another regiment; but accounts varied. They met the rebels just outside the Cashmere gate, and it was all up, for the Sepoys deserted their officers, and shook hands with the Sowars. Every officer was killed. Treacherous, cowardly wretches! they did not spare one."

She was biting her lips, and striving for calmness, determined to hear all. "Did the officers make no resistance?"

"All that they could make, but they were unarmed," he answered. "The next account that came in was, that the natives had risen and joined the insurrection, were firing the bungalows at Deriowgunge, and ransacking the European residences. The troopers were raging about, destroying life; and when their work was done, the Goojours,* who had collected in great numbers, as they were sure to do, followed in their wake, and pillaged everything, even to the matting. The bank was rifled."

Mr. Beecher paused, wondering whether he ought to proceed, but her studied calmness deceived him.

"No one knew where to fly for refuge, or what to do: none knew where to put the officers' wives and children. Many were taken to the Flagstaff Tower; but it was thought unsafe and had to be abandoned. Some escaped—many, I hope—in conveyances, or on horseback, or on foot. Some of the officers retreated to the cantonment outside the gates; but the troopers got there when night came, and killed them and their wives and children."

"Were any of *my* family with them?" she asked, still with unnatural composure.

"No. I will tell you. Before mid-day, the ladies of our house, my host's wife and her cousin, escaped to a close hut, or outhouse, and I managed to hobble there with them. I don't know how I did it: but it is astonishing the artificial strength that fear brings out. Others also took refuge there, about half-a-dozen ladies, your two sisters being amongst them, three or four children, and [illegible] poor little ensign, as ill and weak as I was. We hoped we were [illegible] safety; that the rebels would not think of looking for us there; and some old matting, well wetted, was hung up across the entrance, as if to dry. A Sepoy, who was really faithful (and there were many such in the city) sat before it to guard it; many a one, raging after prey, did he turn aside with a well-assumed story that his old mother was in there, dying—let her die in peace."

* A race of a peculiar caste, who congregate round Meerut and Delhi. They have been compared to our gipsy tribes, and live by plunder, even in times of peace. Some years ago a regiment was obliged to be raised especially to keep them under.

"Was my husband there?"

"Not then. No one came near us all that day. they dared not come, for our sakes; and we bore our suspense and apprehension as we best could, not knowing who was living or who dead, of those dearest to us. What a day that was! We had neither food nor drink; the heat of the weather was fearful; and so many of us stowed together, and closely shut up, rendered the air fetid. We thought it could not be less than 110 degrees. This was not the worst; there were the apprehensions of discovery. We men might brave it, at any rate to appearance, but the poor young women! I believe they would have been glad to die as they cowered there, rather than live to encounter an uncertain fate. I strove to speak comfort to them all, but it was difficult; one or two bore bravely up, and cheered the rest. Late at night, under cover of the darkness, Captain Ordie stole in."

She raised a faint cry at the name. "My husband!"

"He told us what he could of the progress of the day—it was horribly bad, yet I believe he softened it for their ears—and then he began to talk of our own situation. It would be impossible, he said, to keep in the same place of concealment another day, and that we had better join a party who were about to make their escape towards Kurnaul. All seized at the idea eagerly, and wished to start without the delay of an instant. Mrs. Holt, my friend's wife, inquired after her husband, whom she had not seen since morning.

"'He is safe, and unharmed,' replied Captain Ordie. 'You will see him when we are fairly off; but it was not thought well for more than one of us to venture here.'

"'And my husband?' added Mrs. Main, who had done nothing but clasp her baby to her breast all day, and weep silently. 'Is he safe?' Captain Ordie answered evasively," continued Mr. Beecher, "and I knew, by his words and by the turn of his face, that poor Main was gone."

"Go on," groaned Mrs. Ordie. "George's turn comes next."

Mr. Beecher hesitated. "I will finish later," he suggested.

"No, finish now. You cannot leave me in this suspense. It would be cruel."

"Captain Ordie spoke of the plan of departure. The officers had but three horses among them, and the ladies and invalids were to take it in turn to ride; two, with a child, on each horse. All the party were to keep together. At that moment arose a horrible yell, which we knew proceeded from a Sowar, and one of them appeared at the entrance, tearing down the matting. All the light we had was a night-wick in some oil, but we saw his dark face. The children shrieked; the ladies also, and huddled themselves together in a corner; and Captain Ordie advanced to the entrance, and dealt the man a blow on the temple with the butt-end of his pistol."

"I hope it killed him!" she uttered, her eyes sparkling.

"I think it did, for he lay motionless. Captain Ordie kicked him out of the way, and, throwing himself on his hands and knees, crawled out cautiously to reconnoitre. Alas! we soon heard a struggle outside; two more were upon him."

"And he was struck down! I *know* you are going to tell it me," she uttered, in a low, passionate wail.

Mr. Beecher sat silent, his countenance full of distress.

"Louisa, my darling, be composed," interrupted Mrs. Beecher, who had come in search of her. "You know the worst now."

"Yes, I know the worst," she moaned. "They killed him, there and then."

"They did," whispered Mr. Beecher. "It was instantaneous."

She turned sick, and shook violently. But, by strong control, spoke again. "Finish the history. What became of you, inside?"

"It was all commotion in a moment, dreadful commotion. The poor terrified women attempted to fly; some succeeded, and I hope escaped. Providentially there were only these two troopers; had more been upon us, none would have been left. The first thing I saw distinctly was, that one of them had caught Mrs. Main's infant, and was tossing it on the point of his bayonet. He next seized her."

"Constance?" panted Mrs. Ordie.

"Yes. And killed her. Killed her instantly. Be thankful."

Mrs. Ordie pressed down her eyelids, as if she would shut out some unwelcome sight. "Constance murdered," she moaned. "And you tell me to be thankful!"

"Be ever thankful," impressively spoke the missionary. "Others met with a worse fate."

"Sarah Ann?" she shivered. "What became of her?"

"I am unable to tell you. I trust she escaped. At the moment of Mrs. Main's death, I fainted on the floor where I was lying, and that must have saved my life. When I recovered, not a creature —living—was to be seen. The children were lying about; they had been put out of their misery; two of the ladies, and the ensign. Poor young fellow! he had told us, in the day, that he had no parents or near friends to mourn him, so the loss of a little griff, if they did kill him, would not count for much."

"Dead? All?"

"All. The two ladies were Mrs. Holt and Mrs. Main. Of the other ladies I saw no trace. I trust," he added, clasping his hands fervently, "that they escaped. We shall hear of many miraculous escapes: I pray that theirs may be of the number."

"Now, Louisa, let me take you home," urged Mrs. Beecher. "You do know the worst."

"I must hear all," was the answer, uttered in a tone of frenzy. "If I thought there was a word, a recital, left untold to me, I must get up in the middle of the night, and come and ask for it."

"You have heard all," said Mr. Beecher—"all that I know. My

own escape I will not trouble you with. It was wonderful: and I lost no time in coming home overland."

She leaned back on the sofa and closed her eyes. Mrs. Beecher was thinking of her random words—that she would rather lose everything in the world than her child. But her thoughts had not grasped the dreadful possibility of losing her husband.

"When did this happen?" Mrs. Ordie suddenly asked. "What date?"

"I mentioned it," said Mr. Beecher. "Late on the night of the 11th of May."

She leaned forward breathless, her eyes staring. "How late? The exact hour? Speak?"

"It must have been near half-past eleven. When Captain Ordie came in, we asked him the time (for, strange to say, in our hurried flight, not one of us put a watch about us), and his watch said a quarter past eleven; and we were talking, after that, perhaps ten minutes. It must have been about twenty-five minutes after eleven when he was killed."

"Listen to that!" shrieked Louisa Ordie, seizing Mrs. Beecher by the arm. "It was the very hour I saw and heard him. How was he dressed?" she rapidly asked.

"In full regimentals."

"There! There! Do you believe me now, Mrs. Beecher? Ah! you all ridiculed me then; but you hear it! It was my husband that came down the path here—appearing to me in the moment of his death."

The reader must judge of this mystery as he pleases. It happened; at least, to the positive belief of the lady, here called Mrs. Ordie; as her friends can testify. They reason with her in vain. They point out that twenty-five minutes after eleven in Delhi would not be twenty-five minutes after eleven here: they believe that it was, and could have been, nothing but her own vivid imagination, that her thoughts were probably running on her husband through the "George" in the "Vicar of Wakefield." But Louisa Ordie nevertheless believes, and will believe to the end of time, that it was her husband in the spirit who showed himself to her that unhappy night.

THE HOLLY TREE.

Hurrah, hurrah, for the holly tree,
Uprearing his head in the frost and snow ;
Not a jot nor a tittle careth he
For the cloud and the storm and the winds that blow.
The roses that grew on the southern wall
Waxed feeble and few, and we watched them fall.
The hawthorn hath faded, the lily is gone,
The skies of December are pallid and wan ;
But the holly is sturdy, as sturdy can be,
Hurrah, hurrah, for the holly tree !

Hurrah, hurrah, for the holly tree,
There never was surely a bonnier one ;
His prickly armour 'tis good to see,
And his berries are red in the winter sun.
His berries are red, aye ruddy are they,
Though the roses are dead, and the swallow's away.
The icicles hang, and the tempest is keen,
But he hath his garment of glittering green.
Like a king in his glory standeth he,
Hurrah, hurrah, for the holly tree !

Alack, alack, for the holly tree,
Laughing and eager there cometh a troop,
The men to work, and the maidens to see,
And the children to add to the joyous group.
And lo, he is left when their labour is o'er,
Dismantled, bereft of the raiment he wore ;
And branches are prone on the snow-covered earth
To be raised with rejoicing, and carried with mirth.
The spoilers have vanished ; lone shivereth he,
Alack, alack, for the holly tree !

Heigho, heigho, for the holly tree,
But his boughs will gleam in the festive hall ;
And some in the village church may be,
And some give a grace to the cottage wall.
O it is well for the holly tree bold
That he weaveth a spell o'er the young and the old.
One spray in a girl's soft hair shall glow,
And one will lie on a grave, I know.
He shareth the sorrow, he shareth the glee,
Heigho, heigho, for the holly tree !

SYDNEY GREY.

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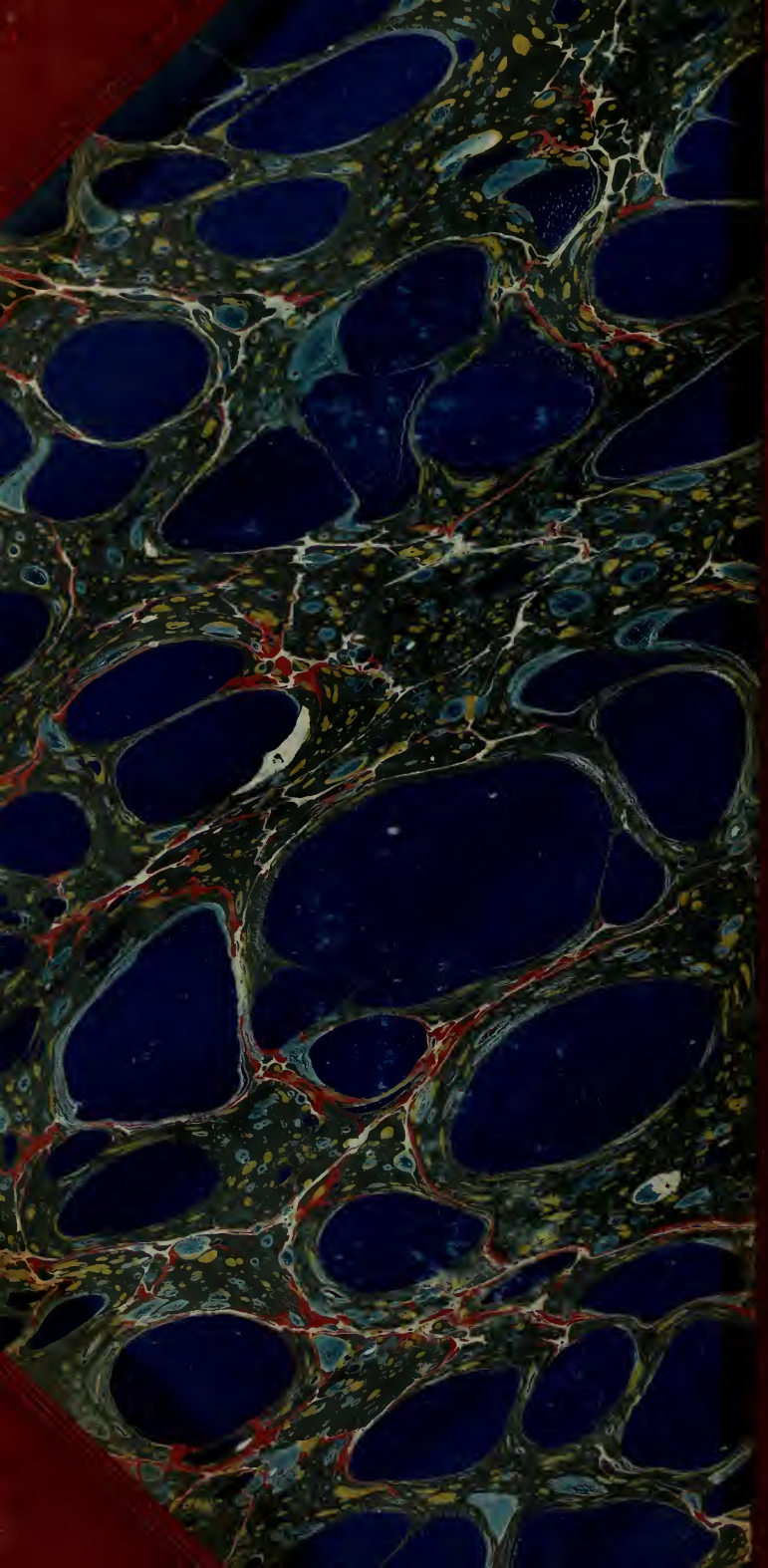
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